

THE GALLOWAY COLLECTION

Volume 13

THE STICKIT MINISTER (and some common men)

By S.R.CROCKETT

Edited by Cally Phillips

Ayton
Republishing the past

First Published by T.Fisher Unwin in 1893.
(Serialised in The Christian Leader)

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This book is available in both digital and print formats:
ISBN: Print edition 978-1-908933-16-4
ISBN: Kindle edition 978-1-908933-60-7
ISBN: epub edition 978-1-908933-61-4

Dedication to Robert Louis Stevenson
Of Scotland and Samoa

I dedicate these stories of that Grey Galloway land
where about the graves of the martyrs the waups are
crying – his heart remembers how.

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INTRODUCTION

Crockett depicts tenderly and sympathetically the poverty of the Scots country. It is one of those books that can be picked up and enjoyed at any time.

In Crockett's first collection of short stories, we are given an introduction to the fictional Galloway village of Drumquhat, and most especially the character of Saunders McQuhirr.

The collection was gathered together from short stories serialised in 'The Christian Leader' (a Glasgow penny weekly magazine). Crockett had been writing such pieces professionally for magazines for a decade before 'The Stickit Minister' was published as an entity. That it was published at all speaks volumes about the publishing practices of the day. With the emergence of mass market publishing, new strategies were tried and risks taken.

The publisher of 'The Stickit Minister,' was T. Fisher Unwin, who was renowned for finding new talent. In 1893 he took a risk on Crockett by publishing his successful magazine stories as a collection. It was a strategy that paid off for both writer and publisher. Crockett had a further four books published by T. Fisher Unwin in the following three years. These included the bestselling 'The Raiders' and 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' as well as the shorter 'Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills' and 'The Playactress.'

Of the twenty four stories in the collection, many do feature ministers. But this should not put off the modern secular reader. We are also introduced to Cleg Kelly, the Edinburgh Gavroche-style urchin who merits his own novel (published 1896) and many other interesting people and places. In 'The Stickit Minister' as a whole though it is true to say that the many failings of both ministers and their flock are laid bare. There is hypocrisy, pride, greed and envy on display but more importantly we get a very clear picture into a world which is long gone.

It is worth remembering that in Crockett's day the

ministry was more often a career choice than a strict vocation. And the minister was in a strange, perhaps unenviable position. He was employed by the Presbytery, whose kirk session was governed by the elders, subject to their will. In Crockett's day the kirk was also central to the provision of education through parish schools. Smart boys could work their way to university and then into the ministry. They then had to work hard to 'get a parish.' This is indeed the path that Crockett himself trod.

The 'Stickit' minister referred to in the title is an explanation of one of the many problems that can befall a man who has chosen the ministry. A 'Stickit' minister is one who cannot get his own parish. He is condemned to wander the earth, preaching wherever they will have him (like some kind of locum doctor or supply teacher) and he is often treated pretty poorly by the local people he preaches to.

The reasons why a minister might remain without a parish are explored in a number of the stories and they are certainly an eye opener for those of us who have no real understanding of Scottish church history (and maybe even to many who are familiar with Presbyterianism today).

The character of Robert Fraser in the title story gives a clear and moving explanation as to why a man might become 'Stickit.' In his case it is because he puts into action the idea that he is 'his brother's keeper.' Seeing his self sacrifice we can only surmise that his brother didn't deserve him! The story of Robert Fraser is revisited by Crockett in his 1900 collection 'The Stickit Minister's Wooing' which is told in the first person by Alec McQuhirr, son of Saunders who features prominently in five of the stories in the collection. Saunders McQuhirr is one of Scottish fiction's great characters. He tells four stories in his own voice, and what a voice it is. I can best describe him as 'barely fictional.' This couthy character draws his strength and humour from Crockett's own grandfather and is a true to life Gallovidian. I know of more than one Galloway tenant farmer who would feel quite at home in Saunders' company, hanging off a farm gate exchanging

news and gossip.

Apart from the stories told in the first person by Saunders, the stories are mostly told in the third person. But far from lending a distance to the narration, the author as narrator tends to creep in and despite his chosen narrative stance, we never feel that Crockett is standing outside, as narrator or author, judging his characters. He maintains a level with them and his stories are more a reportage of lives lived than the commentary of a godlike author looking down on his creations.

If his local characters are true to life and compelling, his natural description is even more so. Over the years and across all his fiction, Crockett's facility for natural description has been universally lauded, even by his critics, and the covert message in these stories seems to be that one is closer to God in nature than anywhere else. Whatever else one enjoys in Crockett's work, if you like to see and feel a sense of place, his writing should appeal. More than once he was described by contemporaries as being 'steeped' in Galloway and it is the life he brings to the natural surroundings that set him apart from other writers of his time.

Crockett is more than comfortable writing in Scots and uses it to reflect all social classes, thus the Scots dialect (even if difficult to the untrained ear/eye) used in his work adds great interest to the stories. Saunders speaks in broad Gallovidian and others use the version of Scots which accords to their station, at a time when Scots was commonly spoken but English was revered as a 'higher' form of language.

In this collection we first encounter another trademark of Crockett's writing – his dry, ironic humour. If one mis-reads the irony in 'The Heather Lintie,' one misses something fundamental about Crockett's view of the world. It is a story which must be understood to be appreciated. If one looks down on Janet Balchrystie (as the Junior Reporter does) one has missed the entire point of the tale. Crockett stands with his ordinary characters in his stories, not above or aside from them and their troubles and foibles.

The Split in the 'Marrow Kirk' shows the social impact of The Disruption through the actions of two little boys, Jiminy and Jaikie. We see them again in 'Bog Myrtle and Peat,' (1895). The Disruption, (1843) was a significant event, perhaps the significant church event for Scotland but today little is known about it. Crockett was also to use it as the backdrop for his novel 'The Banner of Blue' (1903). But the religion is always secondary to the story in Crockett's work, thus it can be of equal interest to those with a penchant for Scots ecclesiastical history and the general reader solely in search of a good story.

Certainly there is much about religion in this collection. But Crockett is always keen to expose hypocrisy in religion. We all recognise that the writing of sermons is a central part of a minister's life. In various stories, Crockett shows us ministers who use their sermons to settle scores and those who learn how to write their sermons from a close observance of (or due to criticism from) their parishioners. There are ministers who 'steal' sermons and ministers whose wives write their sermons for them. Crockett subjects them all to his brand of ironic humour and calls all to account.

Not all of the stories in the collection are Galloway based. Away from Galloway, Cleg Kelly is first introduced to us in two stories in this collection. Reminiscent of Victor Hugo's character Gavroche, he presages Scotland's own 'Oor Wullie' who did not appear until some thirty years later in the Sunday Post. In these stories Crockett shows that even when he leaves the Gallovidian landscape behind, he can still produce fiction of great impact, with the Edinburgh streets inhabited by Cleg both well described and entertaining.

Throughout his fictional works, Crockett often showed that poverty was not the unique privilege of either rural or urban environments. Drawing a parallel with Cleg's harsh life in the Edinburgh slums is the life of Leeb M'lurg and her brothers, who are portrayed in two stories in 'The Stickit Minister,' and confirm that life is every bit as hard in the country as in the town.

This was a theme Crockett would return to later, particularly with his novels 'Kit Kennedy,' (1899) and 'Kid McGhie,' (1906).

Crockett was a minister himself when he published these stories, but it would not be long before his success as a writer saw him give up the ministry to become a full time writer. He may have given inspiring sermons, but it would be a mistake to think that his stories were all sermonising. If you engage with Crockett you will find adventure, romance, history, social commentary and a great love of his native land. 'The Stickit Minister' may be an introduction into his fictional worlds but it is just an introduction. There is far more to be read and the Galloway Collection has brought them all together for the modern reader to enjoy.

Cally Phillips
(editor, *The Galloway Collection*)

1. THE STICKIT MINISTER

The crows were wheeling behind the plough in scattering clusters, and plumping singly upon the soft, thick grubs which the ploughshare was turning out upon an unkindly world. It was a bask blowy day in the end of March, and there was a hint of storm in the air—a hint emphasised for those skilled in weather lore by the presence of half a dozen sea-gulls, white vagrants among the black coats, blown by the south wind up from the Solway—a snell, Scotch, but not unfriendly day altogether. Robert Fraser bent to the plough handles, and cast a keen and wary eye towards his guide posts on the ridge. His face was colourless, even when a dash of rain came swirling across from the crest of Ben Gairn, whose steep bulk heaved itself a blue haystack above the level horizon of the moorland. He was dressed like any other ploughman of the south uplands—rough homespun much the worse for wear, and leggings the colour of the red soil which he was reversing with the share of his plough. Yet there was that about Robert Fraser which marked him no common man. When he paused at the top of the ascent, and stood with his back against the horns of the plough, the countryman's legacy from Adam of the Mattock, he pushed back his weatherbeaten straw hat with a characteristic gesture, and showed a white forehead with blue veins channelling it—a damp, heavy lock of black hair clinging to it as in Severn's picture of John Keats on his deathbed. Robert Fraser saw a couple of black specks which moved smoothly and evenly along the top of the distant dyke of the highway. He stood still for a moment or two watching them. As they came nearer, they resolved themselves into a smart young man sitting in a well-equipped gig drawn by a showily-actioned horse, and driven by a man in livery. As they passed rapidly along the road the hand of the young man appeared in a careless wave of recognition over the stone dyke, and Robert Fraser lifted his slack reins in staid acknowledgment. It was more than a year since the brothers had looked each other so nearly in the eyes. They were Dr. Henry Fraser,

the rising physician of Cairn Edward, and his elder brother Robert, once Student of Divinity at Edinburgh College, whom three parishes knew as 'The Stickit Minister.'

When Robert Fraser stabled his horses that night and went in to his supper, he was not surprised to find his friend, Saunders M'Quhirr of Drumquhat, sitting by the peat fire in the room. Almost the only thing which distinguished the Stickit Minister from the other small farmers of the parish of Dullarg was the fact that he always sat in the evening by himself ben the hoose, and did not use the kitchen in common with his housekeeper and herd boy, save only at meal-times. Robert had taken to Saunders ever since—the back of his ambition broken—he had settled down to the farm, and he welcomed him with shy cordiality.

'You'll take a cup of tea, Saunders?' he asked.

'Thank ye, Robert, I wadna be waur o't,' returned his friend.

I saw your brither the day,' said Saunders M'Quhirr, after the tea-cups had been cleared away, and the silent housekeeper had replaced the books upon the table. Saunders picked a couple of them up, and, having adjusted his glasses, he read the titles—Milton's Works, and a volume of a translation of Dorner's Person of Christ.

'I saw yer brither the day; he maun be gettin' a big practice!'

'Ay!' said Robert Fraser, very thoughtfully.

Saunders M'Quhirr glanced up quickly. It was, of course, natural that the unsuccessful elder brother should envy the prosperous younger, but he had thought that Robert Fraser was living on a different plane. It was one of the few things that the friends had never spoken of, though every one knew why Dr. Fraser did not visit his brother's little farm. 'He's gettin' in wi' the big fowk noo, an' thinks maybe that his brither wad do him nae credit.' That was the way the clash of the countryside explained the matter.

'I never told you how I came to leave the college, Saunders,' said the younger man, resting his brow on a hand that even the horn of the plough could not make

other than diaphanous.

'No,' said Saunders quietly, with a tender gleam coming into the humorsome kindly eyes that lurked under their bushy tussocks of grey eyebrow. Saunders's humour lay near the Fountain of Tears.

'No,' continued Robert Fraser, 'I have not spoken of it to so many; but you've been a good frien' to me, Saunders, and I think you should hear it. I have not tried to set myself right with folks in the general, but I would like to let you see clearly before I go my ways to Him who seeeth from the beginning.'

'Hear till him,' said Saunders, 'man, yer hoast is no' near as sair as it was i' the back-end. Ye'll be here lang efter me; but lang or short, weel do ye ken, Robert Fraser, that ye need not to pit yersel' richt wi' me. Hae I no' kenned ye sins ye war the size o' twa scrubbers?'

'I thank you, Saunders,' said Robert, 'but I am well aware that I'm to die this year. No, no, not a word. It is the Lord's will! It's mair than seven year now since I first kenned that my days were to be few. It was the year my faither died, and left Harry and me by our lane.

'He left no siller to speak of, just plenty to lay him decently in the kirkyard among his forebears. I had been a year at the Divinity Hall then, and was going up to put in my discourses for the next session. I had been troubled with my breast for some time, and so called one day at the infirmary to get a word with Sir James. He was very busy when I went in, and never noticed me till the hoast took me. Then on a sudden he looked up from his papers, came quickly over to me, put his own white handkerchief to my mouth, and quietly said, 'Come into my room, laddie!'

Ay, he was a good man and a faithful, Sir James, if ever there was one. He told me that with care I might live five or six years, but it would need great care. Then a strange prickly coldness came over me, and I seemed to walk light-headed in an atmosphere suddenly rarefied. I think I know now how the mouse feels under the air-pump.'

'What's that?' queried Saunders.

'A cruel ploy not worth speaking of,' continued the Stickit Minister. 'Well, I found something in my throat

when I tried to thank him. But I came my ways home to the Dullarg, and night and day I considered what was to be done, with so much to do and so little time to do it. It was clear that both Harry and me could not gang through the college on the little my faither had left. So late one night I saw my way clear to what I should do. Harry must go, I must stay. I must come home to the farm, and be my own 'man', then I could send Harry to the college to be a doctor, for he had no call to the ministry as once I thought I had. More than that, it was laid on me to tell Jessie Loudon that Robert Fraser was no better than a machine set to go five year.

'Now all these things I did, Saunders, but there's no use telling you what they cost in the doing. They were right to do, and they were done. I do not repent any of them. I would do them all over again were they to do, but it's been bitterer than I thought.'

The Stickit Minister took his head off his hand and leaned wearily back in his chair.

'The story went over the country that I had failed in my examinations, and I never said that I had not. But there were some that knew better who might have contradicted the report if they had liked. I settled down to the farm, and I put Harry through the college, sending all but a bare living to him in Edinburgh. I worked the work of the farm, rain and shine, ever since, and have been for these six years the 'stickit minister' that all the world kens the day. Whiles Harry did not think that he got enough. He was always writing for more, and not so very pleased when he did not get it. He was aye different to me, ye ken, Saunders, and he canna be judged by the same standard as you and me.'

'I ken,' said Saunders M'Quhirr, a spark of light lying in the quiet of his eyes.

'Well,' continued Robert Fraser, lightened by Saunders's apparent agreement, 'the time came when he was clear from the college, and wanted a practice. He had been ill-advised that he had not got his share of the farm, and he wanted it sold to share and share alike. Now I kenned, and you ken, Saunders, that it's no' worth much in one share let alone two. So I got the place quietly bonded, and bought him old Dr. Aitkin's

practice in Cairn Edward with the money...'

'I have tried to do my best for the lad, for it was laid on me to be my brother's keeper. He doesna come here much,' continued Robert, 'but I think he's not so ill against me as he was. Saunders, he waved his hand to me when he was gaun by the day!'

'That was kind of him,' said Saunders M'Quhirr.

'Ay, was it no',' said the Stickit Minister, eagerly, with a soft look in his eyes as he glanced up at his brother's portrait in cap and gown, which hung over the china dogs on the mantelpiece.

'I got my notice this morning that the bond is to be called up in November,' said Robert. 'So I'll be obliged to flit.'

Saunders M'Quhirr started to his feet in a moment. 'Never,' he said, with the spark of fire alive now in his eyes, 'never as lang as there's a beast on Drumquhat, or a poun' in Cairn Edward Bank '—bringing down his clenched fist upon the Milton on the table.

'No, Saunders, no,' said the Stickit Minister, very gently; 'I thank you kindly, but I'll be flitted before that...'

2. ACCEPTED BY THE BEASTS

It was a bright June day when the Reverend Hugh Hamilton was placed in the little kirk of the Cowdenknowes. He was twenty-two years of age, and he had flushed like a girl of sixteen when he preached as a candidate before the congregation. But he did not blush when he was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. There was a look of the other world on his face as he knelt in sight of all the people to receive on his yellow hair the hands of the assembled brethren. Hugh Hamilton had been devoted to temple service, like Samuel, from his birth; yet there had never been anything of the 'pious boy' about him even as a lad. He could always climb a tree or run a race to the top of the Bow Fell with any one. He was therefore never lightly treated by his companions, but as he had not been known to tell a lie even when circumstances made it extremely convenient, nor even so much as steal a turnip—a plant in which there are no rights of property in Scotland—his companions had long ago decided that there must be a lack of sound morality somewhere about him. He was a popular sort of boy, but was not considered to have very good principles.

At college he spent most of his time in helping the laggards of his companions over the numerous examination fences that barred their way—mere skipping-ropes to him, but very five-barred gates to the Rodericks and Dugalds who had come down from the hills with the grace of God in their hearts, a bag of oatmeal coarse ground for brose in their wooden boxes, and twelve pounds in single notes inside their waistcoats to see them through the session.

One of these came all the way to Hugh's ordination. He was now the Rev. Roderick M'Leod of the parish of Kilmuir in the Lews, and he made the speech of the evening. It ran or rather hirpled somewhat as follows:

'I hef arose to speak, no' that I am that goot at the speakin', but I can not gang away back to the Hielan's an' keep silence on this occasion. For if it had no' been for your minister and the kindness of Providence, it's

no' here that I would hef been, nor yet at my awn manse in the Lews; but it's sittin' I would hef been on a stone dyke in the Ross of Mull keepin' the craws aff three rigs of pitawties. If I could speak to you in the Gaelic, I would tell you the feelin's that's in my heart for your minister, but the English is no' a langwage that is good for expressin' the feelings in. I hef no wife at awl, but if I had ten wives I wouldna think ass muckle o' them ass I do of your minister for his kindness to a puir lad from Mull.'

It was thought to be a very happy settlement, and Hugh Hamilton felt it to be a consecration. Had he been called to minister to a congregation of the angels in some rural parish of heaven, he could not have held higher opinions of his parishioners. He might have had a fair chance in the garden of Eden to the general advantage of the race, but he was sorely handicapped in the Cowdenknowes. He was aware that all men did not act aright on every occasion; but Hugh considered this to be not so much their own fault, as a proof of the constant agency of that power which worketh for evil, of which he was almost morbidly conscious in his own soul.

His first sermon was a wonder. As the theological postman said, 'He was ayont the cluds afore we could get oor books shut, oot o' sicht gin we gat oorsel's settled in oor seats, an' we saw nae mair o' him till he said, Amen.' But Hugh Hamilton knew nothing of this. He had been in high communion with the unseen, and he doubted not that each one of his hearers had accompanied him all the way and seen the sights of the seventh heavens as he had seen them.

As he walked down the street on the following day he swung along to an unheard melody—the music of the other world playing in his ear. But he did not know enough of this world to catch the eye of the wife of the richest merchant in the place when she had got all ready to bow to him.

'An' him had his tea in my verra hoose on Wednesday three weeks, nae farther gane, the prood upstart!' said she.

Hugh Hamilton went on to the deathbed of a

child, all unconscious that he had made an enemy for life. But Mrs. Penpont went home in a white rage, and told her husband the story with frills and furbelows of adornment—how the new minister had 'slichtit her, the Bailie's wife, that had taen twa seats in his kirk juist for obleegement—her that was a laird's dochter.'

'I wadna work the auld man's kailyard ower sair!' said her husband.

'An' you're but little better, Andra Penpont, jibin' an' jeerin' at yer ain marriest wife, you that wad hae been nocht ava but for what ye got wi' me!'

"Deed, Jess, I wad let that flee stick to the wa' gin I war you. A' that I ever gat wi' you has been paid for twa or three times ower!'

But Mrs. Andrew did not stand fire, for her husband knew how to keep a tight grip of these two vast forces in affairs domestic—the purse and the temper. Great power is given to him who knoweth how to keep these two.

Hugh Hamilton was not a great success in the pulpit. 'He's far ower the heids o' the fowk,' was the complaint laid against him where the wiseacres most did congregate. 'Withoot doot he has graun' heid-knowledge, but it's no' to be lookit for that a laddie like him should hae the leevin' experience o' religion.'

But he had a mysterious fascination for children of all ages. They recognised that in somewise he was kin to them. The younger they were, the stronger seemed the attraction which drew them to the minister. He seemed to be a citizen of that country forth from which they had lately voyaged. There were a dozen of them ever about his knees, listening rapt while he told them the simple stories which pleased them best, or as he sang to them in a voice like a heavenly flute or a lonely bird singing in the first of Spring.

'I like nae siccan wark,' said some; 'how is he to fricht them when he comes to catechise them if he makes so free wi' them the noo, that's what I wad like to ken?' 'Na, an' anither thing, he's aye sing, singin' at his hymns. Noo, there may be twa-three guid hymns, though I hae my doots—but among a' that he sings, it stan's to reason that there maun be a hantle o'

balderdash!’

Meantime Hugh Hamilton went about as he did ever with his head in the air, unconscious that he had an evil-wisher in the world, smiling with boyish frankness on all with his short-sighted blue eyes. There was not a lass in the parish but looked kindly upon him, for Hugh's eyes had the dangerous gift of personal speech, so that the slightest word from him seemed under the radiance of his glance to be weighty with personal meanings. If one heart beat faster as he walked down the long green Kirk Loan with May Carruthers, the belle of the parish, that heart was not Hugh Hamilton's. He was trysted to a fairer bride, and like Him whom he took to be his Master in all things, he longed to lay down his life for the people. But he was too humble to expect that his God would so honour him.

He awakened memories of that young James Renwick who died in the Edinburgh Grassmarket, last of them who counted not their lives dear for the sake of the Scottish Covenant; but he had something too of the over-sweetness which marks certain of Rutherford's letters. His was a life foredoomed to bitter experience, and to the outsider his actual experience seemed of the grimmest and bitterest, yet he never thought himself worth even self-pity, that most enervating draught which any man can drink. Like the Israelitish city, he was ringed round with unseen celestial defences and passed unscathed through the most terrible experiences.

So two years went over the young man's head, and to the few who best understood him he seemed like an angel entertained unawares. But in the secret darks of the stairs, in the whispered colloquy of the parlours, an enemy was at work; and murderous whispers, indefinite, disquieting, suggesting vague possibilities of all things evil, brought with them the foul reek of the pit where they were forged, paralysing his work and killing his best usefulness. But Hugh Hamilton wotted not at all of it. What threats came to him by the penny post or were slipped into his letter-box on dark nights, were known only to himself and his Maker. Probably he held

them to be only what he must expect from the Accuser of the Brethren. At least, he made no sound, and none knew if he suffered. Elders dropped away, members lifted their lines and went to other communions.

Only his Sabbath school remained unimpaired. There his marvellous voice shrilled clearer and ever clearer, even after there remained no teacher to assist him, as though he had led his little flock to the very gate of heaven, and were now pleading with the Guardian of the Keys to let the children in straightway to their inheritance. Children of strict and orthodox parents were removed, but the Sabbath school remained full. For this strange young minister, a fairy changeling surely, had but to go out into the highways and the hedges to compel others to come in.

Then in a little there came the clamant and definite bitterness of the 'Fama Clamosa'—the movine of the Presbytery which had licensed and ordained him, by his ruling elder and one other of the congregation. In the reverend court itself there was, at first, only bitterness and dissension. Hugh Hamilton met his accusers openly, but there was no fiery indignation in his defence, only a certain sad disappointment. He had received his first backset, and it told on him like a sentence of death. His faith in man died in a day; therefore he clung more closely to his faith in a God who looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart.

He could not conceive how it was possible that any should for a moment believe those things which certain witnessed against him. He had brought no witnesses. He would employ no lawyer. If the Presbytery thought fit in the interests of the religion of the parish, he would demit his charge; if they judged it right he would accept deposition without a word.

But Hugh Hamilton was not to be deposed. Suspended during inquiry, he still did the few duties which remained to him, and visited wherever there was a door open for him to enter. There were not many. This was for him 'that Mount Sinai in Arabia' beneath which his Scripture told him the Christ's Man must a while sojourn.

One morning the farmer of Drumrash went out early among his beasts, and was surprised to find them grouped in a dense swaying mass about an empty quarry, horning and shouldering one another in their eagerness to approach. Mysterious sounds arose from the whin-bound quarry hole, disquieting even in the cool dawn of the morning. The farmer crept to a gap in the whin-bushes, and through it he was astonished to see the suspended minister of the Cowdenknowes with a face all suffused with joy, singing words he could not understand to a tune no man had ever heard before; while about him, ever nearer and nearer, the 'nowt' beasts pressed, tossing their sullen fronts, silent and fascinated by the magic of the singing.

Then the farmer remembered that he had heard tell that the minister had wandered on the hills singing and praying to himself ever since they shut the door of his Sabbath school against him.

Gradually the words came clearer—

'He was despised . . . despised . . .

And rejected of men, A Man of Sorrows,

And acquainted with grief?'

So the melody swayed and thrilled, falling for a moment into delicious heart-breaking silences, anon returning with thrilling power, like the voice of a martyr praising God out of the place of fire. Drumrash felt his eyes wet with unaccustomed tears. He had never heard of Handel, and if he had he need not have been less affected, for surely never was the great music sung in such wise or to such an audience.

'He was despised . . . despised . . . And rejected of men . . .'

The lowering foreheads and tossing horns drooped lower, and hung over the singer like the surge of a breaking wave.

The song rose, beating tremulously against the sky, till the listener felt his heart brimming to the overflow; so, abruptly rising, he turned and fled, leaving Hugh Hamilton alone with his last congregation.

Two hours afterwards a shepherd came that way by chance seeking a lost lamb, and in its place he found the minister of Cowdenknowes, fallen still and silent,

his face turned to the sky, and the dew of the morning yet wet upon it. There was a light of emancipation on his brow, for he had seen the Vision which every man shall one day see, and it had not affrighted him. There was even a kind of triumph under the film which had begun to gather over the eyes of translucent blue.

They buried him at his own expense in the deserted kirkyard at Kirkclauch, a mile or two along the windy brow of the sea cliff, looking to the sale of his books to defray the cost. There were just six people at the funeral, and one of them was the farmer of Drumrash. But the whole countryside stood afar off to see what the end would be. Only the 'nowt' beasts came gazing and wondering into the unfenced and deserted burying-ground as though they at least would have mourned for him who had drawn them about him when other congregation he had none.

Hardly a week after the minister was laid to rest, the dead body of the Strange Woman, whose accusation had wrought the ill—one of small repute but infinite power of mischief—was found, wave-driven, at the foot of the Kirkclauch Heuchs. On the cliff edge above there lay a hat and veil, the latter neatly folded, and on it a note pinned—

I can live no longer. I betrayed innocent blood. As Judas betrayed his Master, so I sold him—yet got neither money nor kiss. Now I also go to my own place.'

The minister's books fetched enough to put up a little tombstone of red sandstone simply graven with his name and age. But the farmer of Drumrash thought it looked bare and unkindly, so taking counsel of no man, he laid his wait one day for Bourtree, the drunken stone-cutter. Him he stood over with the horsewhip of coercion till he had done his will. So now, in staggering capitals, you may read the words— HUGH HAMILTON, Aged 24 Years. 'He was despised . . . and rejected of men.'

And still Hugh Hamilton's last congregation toss their sullen frontals, and nose with the moist and stupid affection of 'bestial' the crumbling stone which, on that wind-vexed and unkindly promontory, tells the infrequent wayfarer of yet another 'Rejected of Me

3. TRIALS FOR LICENSE BY THE PRESBYTERY OF PITSCOTTIE

Hex I cam' hame from my first presbytery at Pitscottie, the wife was awfu keen to ken a' that had passed, for she said, 'If it's sae graun' to listen to yae minister on Sabbath, what maun it no be to hear a dizzen a' at yince?' But there was juist where my wife was mistaen that time whatever, for as a matter o' experience, it's a moral impossibeelity to hear ony yin o' twal ministers when they are a' speakin' at yae time.

But I said to Mrs. MaWhurr, 'Do you no' think that ye had better wait till the forenicht, an' then ye can hear a' aboot it, no in snips an' clippets? Rob Adair will likely be ower frae the toon, for he was gaun to come this way to gie a look at some score or twa o' Kirkconnel's yowes.'

So in the efternoon she pat on a bit fire in the parlour ben the hoose, which she disna do unless we're gaun to hae company, and by the time that Rob Adair cam' she was in graun' fettle to listen. For ye see this was the first time that I had ever been presbytery elder, an' oor minister was fell anxious for me to gang doon to Pitscottie, for there was a lad that he kenned comin' a' the road frae Enbra' for leecense to preach the gospel, an' the minister thocht that some o' the auld yins o' the presbytery nicht be ower sair on the young man.

Rob Adair cam' in wat an' dry, an' to help baith, got a change o' claes an' his tea oot o' oor best cheena. Then when the pipes were gaun weel, they baith lookit ower at me. Brawly kenned I that they were hotchin' for me to gie them the presbytery; but I gaed on askin' Rob aboot the price o' beasts, an' hoo mony lambs had been sold on the hill that day, till my wife could stand it no longer.

'Saunders MaWhurr,' says she, 'if there's a waur tried woman than me or a mair aggravatin' man than you in sax pairishes, I dinna ken them.'

So I began.

'Weel, as ye ken, I was no' that carin' aboot gaun to the presbytery at the first go-off, but oor minister wadna be said 'No' to.'

'An' you're no' the man to say it gin he war,' said the mistress.

'She means that me an' the minister 'grees fine,' said I to Rob, 'though he wasna my man when he cam', on accoont o' his giein oot a Paraphrase. This was my opeenion at that time; he haes a harmonium noo i' the kirk, an' Alexander M'Quhirr, Drumquhat, was the first name on the list o' subscribers. Change?—I wadna gie a whustle for a man that canna change when he fin's he's wrang; so it's no wonder oor minister an' me's verra pack. He has taen me a lang gate sins him an' me fell acquaint. I used to think Jeems Carlyle the only yin o' the Carlyles that had come to ony guid (an' deed there were few better sheep in Dumfries market on Wednesdays than Jeems Carlyle's); but oor minister, wi' the help o' the Almichty an' some buiks o' Tammas Carlyle, thrawn stick as he was, hae garred anither thrawn stick o' a farmer body lift his een abune the nowt an' the shairn.'

'Skip the minister, an' the haivers the twa o' ye talk about auld Tam—drive on wi' yer presbytery!' said my wife. In the generality, ye ken, I'm ower slow for the wife; she kind o' likes a' things to gang forrit gye an' sherp, an' wad gar a' the hens hae their layin' dune i' the mornin' an' their nests made afore they gaed oot to pick a single corn.

Yince I offended her sair when the factor was here to his tea. 'Hae a bit o' this skim milk cheese, Factor,' says I, 'it's my wife's ain makkin', an' I'se warrant there's neyther dirt nor butter in't!'

'Weel, the presbytery be't,' says I, for I saw that my wife's patience, never verra lang at the best, was comin' near an end. I ken the length o't to a hair, as by this time I hae a good richt to do. 'Weel, the coort met an' was constitutit.'

'What's that?' asked Rob Adair.

'Fegs, I do not ken, ye'll hae to ask the clerk, it was him that said it,' says I, 'an' then there was reports, an' strings o' feegures like laddies' coonts; but naebody payed muckle attention, but talkit to their neebours till the clerk caaed 'Order!' Then they were quait for half a meenit, an' syne at it again. Deed the clerk talkit too

when he didna mind.'

'Dear sirce, an' that's a presbytery. I thocht it was like a week o' sacraments!' said my wife.

'Verra far frae that,' says I, 'for o' a' the craiturens to fecht, doos an' ministers are the maist quarrelsome.'

'Did oor minister fecht?' asked the mistress, verra pointed.

'Na, he was raither a peacemaker, so to speak,' says I, cautious like; 'of coorse a man haes whiles to speak his mind.'

'Ow! he's the wee white hen that never lays away— oor minister, I ken,' says she, dried like.

'Ye never war the bird to fyle yer ain kirk riggin,' said Rob. (Whiles I'm feared that auld Rob is gettin' a wee doited.)

'Yer keepin' me frae the presbytery wi' yer haivers,' says I, an' that made them as quate as pussy. 'Weel, in a wee it came on to the leccensin', an' the laddie frae Enbra' was bidden to step in along wi' twa ither lads frae the neebourhood that had compleetit their studies at the college. The Enbra' laddie had been an' unco graun' scholar—had gotten the Knox Fellowship, I think they caaed it, an' was noo gaun oot to be a missionar' tae the haythen. So afore they could let him gang they bood examine him on the Hebrew an' Latin, an' ither langwiges that naebody speaks noo. I wasna lang in seein' that the lad kenned mair than maybes a' the presbytery pitten thegither. ('Surely no' than yer ain minister!' pat in my wife.) An' for the life o' me I couldna see what they could fin' faut wi'. The ither twa were nice lads aneuch, an' they hummered an' ha'ed through some gate, but the Enbra' lad never made a stammer, an' had his answers oot afore they could read their quastions off the paper.'

'But I thocht that they war a' sair again the paper,' said my wife.

'Weel, sae they maistly are, but some o' them are maybes a wee mair comfortable wi' a bit note when it comes to the Greek an' the Laitin.

'At ony rate, it wasna till they cam' to the discoorses that there was ony o' the kin' o' din that oor minister was sae feared o'. The laddie was askit to read

yin o' his discoorses—I kenna what it was aboot, something onywyne that he had written in the Laitin, but was askit to read in the English as bein' mair convenienter for the presbytery.

'He wasna half wey through when up gets Maister Begbie frae Soorkirk, michty door-lookin,' an' he says, 'I'll no' sit in this presbytery an' listen to ony siccan doctrine, frae a Knox Fella or ony ither fella!' says he.

'An' wi' that Maister Pitbye o' the Dullarg gat himsel' on his legs; 'I canna help thinkin',' says he, 'that we wadna hae been asked to license the young man noo afore us if he had been considered soun' in the faith in his ain presbytery. There maun be something sore wrang,' he says.

'A' this time the young man had been standin' wi' a face like daith, his lips workin', tryin' to get a word in, an' oor minister haudin' him by the coat-tails, an' tellin' him for ony sake to sit doon, that there war plenty there to speak for him. But he got awa' frae the minister an' juist on Maister Pitbye's heels he spoke oot, 'May I say that this discoorse has passed through Professor Robertson's hauns and has received his approval?'

'Oor minister sat back wi' a look in his face as muckle as to say 'Ye hae done for't noo, young man !' Then there was a din to speak about. There was Maister Bangour frae Muldow, an' he was a wild man this day. Professor Robison, indeed! I'll learn you young man, that Professor Robison has nae standin' i the presbytery o' Pitscottie, an' faith, if he had we wad libel him this verra day, for he's a rank heyretic, leadin the young men o' oor kirk astray efter strange gods Ay an' I wull testifee...'

'Sit doon,' says Forbes, the new-placed minister o the Pits, him that the collier lads like so weel, 'testifee in your ain pairish if you want to testifee! Talk sense here!' says he. Forbes is a determined North countryman as dour an' radical as fire, that got scunnered at hame wi' the mair auld-fashioned o' his brethren o' the kirk. He's no a great respecer o' persons neyther. He looks as if he had focht mony battles in his day, and by his set teeth I could see he was bidin' his time for anither.

'Richt gled was I that he didna mean to set them in me.

'By this time the fiery young minister frae the Shaws was on his feet, and wi' the strongest words an' a power o' gesture he was layin' intil them on the ither side. An' they were speakin' aye back till ye couldna tell what was what. But I watched Forbes bidin' his time wi' a face like a grew when he sees the hare but canna get slippit.

'There was the verra sma'est calm, an' then like a shot there was Maister Forbes at the table. Some o' them cried, 'Hear Mr. Girmory,' but Forbes said—

'No, Maister Begbie, ye'll be hearin' me the noo. Ye are makkin' bonny fules o' yersels.'

'My conscience!' said my wife, who was listening with her whole being, 'was he no' blate to say that to ministers?'

'Hoots, woman, that's nocht to what he said efter:

'Ye are pittin' a premium on mediocrity,' he says. 'Thae ither twa chaps ye let through without a word, though they stammered like a boy new into the ten penny. But ye settled on this lad because he was clever, an' wrote what he thocht himsel', an' didna juist tak' twa-three pages frae a sermon o' Spurgeon's, or water doon the Shorter's Quaestions,' says he. 'As for you,' he says, turnin' sharp to Maister Pitbye, 'ye are speakin' on a quaston ye ken nocht aboot ava. An' ye are weel aware ye ken nocht aboot it. Gae hame, man,' he says, 'an' read yer Calvin, or buy a Turretin an' read him, an' then come back an' gie us an opeenion worth listenin' to on a theological subject.'

'Order, order!' said the clerk, but the moderator said naething, for he didna want Forbes down on him.

'I'll no' be spoken to in that mainner. I've never listened to sic words in my life,' said Maister Pitbye.

'The mair's the peety,' says Maister Forbes, 'it's time ye did—but better late than never!'

'I move we proceed to license,' says oor minister, verra quait; so efter a show o' hands, an' a bit grummle, they juist did that; but there was some warm wark efter the young men had gaen oot, an' yince it lookit as if the neeves micht sune be goin'; but it

cleared up verra sudden, and when a' was dune, and they cam' oot, they war a' as thick as thieves—an Maister Bourtree, nae less, gaed roon shakin' hands wi' everybody, an' sayin', 'Whatna graun' day we've had the day; there's been some life in Pitscottie presbytery this day, something worth comin' doun frae Muldow for!'

But I'm no' so sure that it was as great fun for the puir lad frae Enbra'. He said to mysel' he was glad he was gaun awa' to the Cannibal Islands, an' no settlin' in oor pairt o' the country.'

4. THE HEATHER LINTIE

Janet Balchyrstie lived in a little cottage at the back of the Long Wood of Barbrax. She had been a hardworking woman all her days, for her mother died when she was but young, and she had lived on, keeping her father's house by the side of the single-track railway line. Gavin Balchyrstie was a foreman platelayer on the P.P.R., and, with two men under him, had charge of a section of three miles. He lived just where that distinguished but impecunious line plunges into a moss-covered granite wilderness of moor and bog—where there is not more than a shepherd's hut to the half-dozen miles, and where the passage of a train is the occasion of commotion among scattered groups of black-faced sheep.

Gavin Balchyrstie's three miles of P.P.R. metals gave him little work, but a good deal of healthy exercise. The black-faced sheep breaking down the fences and straying on the line side, and the torrents coming down the granite gullies, foaming white after a waterspout, and tearing into his embankments, undermining his chairs and plates, were the only troubles of his life. There was, however, a little public house at 'The Huts,' which in the old days of construction had had the license, and which had lingered alone, license and all, when its immediate purpose in life had been fulfilled, because there was nobody but the whaups and the railway officials on the passing trains to object to its continuance. Now it is cold and blowy on the westland moors, and neither whaups nor dark green uniforms object to a little refreshment up there. The mischief was that Gavin Balchyrstie did not, like the guards and engine-drivers, go on with the passing train. He was always on the spot, and the path through Barbrax Wood to the Railway Inn was as well trodden as that which led over the big moss, where the whaups built, to the great white viaduct of Loch Merrick, where his three miles of parallel gleaming responsibility began.

When his wife was but newly dead, and his Janet just a smart elf-locked lassie running to and from the school, Gavin got too much in the way of 'slippin' doon

by.' When Janet grew to be woman-muckle, Gavin kept the habit, and Janet hardly knew that it was not the use-and-wont of all fathers to sidle down to a contiguous Railway Arms, and return some hours later with uncertain step, and face picked out with bright pin-points of red—the sure mark of the confirmed drinker of whisky neat.

They were long days in the cottage at the back of Barbrax Long Wood. The little 'but and ben' was whitewashed till it dazzled the eyes as you came over the brae to it and found it set against the solemn depths of dark-green firwood. From early morn when she saw her father off, till the dusk of the day when he would return for his supper, Janet Balchrystie saw no human being. She heard the muffled roar of the trains through the deep cutting at the back of the wood, but she herself was entirely out of sight of the carriagefuls of travellers whisking past within half a mile of her solitude and meditation.

Janet was what is called a 'through-gaun lass,' and her work for the day was often over by eight o'clock in the morning. Janet grew to womanhood without a sweetheart. She was plain, and she looked plainer than she was in the dresses which she made for herself by the light of nature and what she could remember of the current fashions at Merrick Kirk, to which she went every alternate Sunday. Her father and she took day about. Wet or shine, she tramped to Merrick Kirk, even when the rain blattered and the wind raved and bleated alternately among the pines of the Long Wood of Barbrax. Her father had a simpler way of spending his day out. He went down to the Railway Inn and drank 'ginger-beer' all day with the landlord. Ginger-beer is an unsteady beverage when taken the day by the length. Also the man who drinks it steadily and quietly never enters on any inheritance of length of days.

So it came to pass that one night Gavin Balchrystie did not come home at all, at least not till he was brought lying comfortably on the door of a disused third-class carriage, which was now seeing out its career, anchored under the bank at Loch Merrick, where Gavin had used it as a shelter. The driver of the

'six-fifty up' train had seen him walking soberly along towards the Huts (and the Railway Inn), letting his long surfaceman's hammer fall against the rail keys occasionally as he walked. He saw him bend once, as though his keen ear detected a false ring in a loose length between two plates. This was the last that was seen of him till the driver of the 'nine-thirty-seven down' express — the 'boat-train,' as the employees of the P.P.R. call it, with a touch of respect in their voices—passed Gavin fallen forward on his face, just when he was flying down grade under a full head of steam. It was duskily clear, with a great lake of crimson light dying into purple over the hills of midsummer heather. The driver was John Platt, the Englishman from Crewe, who had been brought from the great London and North-Western Railway, locally know as 'The Ellnen-doubleyou.' In these remote railway circles the talk is as exclusively of matters of the four-foot way as in Crewe or Derby. There is an inspector of traffic whose portly presence now graces Carlisle station, who left the P.P.R. in these sad days of amalgamation, because he could not endure to see so many 'Sou'-West' waggons passing over the sacred metals of the P.P.R. permanent way. From his youth he had been trained in a creed of two articles—'To swear by the P.P.R. through thick and thin, and hate the apple-green of the 'Sou'-West.' 'It was as much as he could do to put up with the sight of the abominations. To have to hunt for their trucks when they got astray, was more than mortal could stand—so he fled the land.

When they stopped the express for Gavin Balchrystie every man on the line felt that it was an honour to the dead. John Platt sent a 'gurring' thrill through the train as he put his brakes hard down, and whistled for the guard. He, thinking that the Merrick Viaduct was down at least, twirled his brake to such purpose that the rear car progressed along the metals by a series of convulsive bounds. Then they ran softly back, and there lay Gavin fallen forward on his knees, as though he had been trying to rise, or had knelt down to pray. Let him have 'the benefit of the doubt' in this world. In the next, if all tales be true, there is no such

thing.

So Janet Balchrystie dwelt alone in the white 'but-an'-ben' at the back of the Long Wood of Barbrax. The factor gave her notice; but the laird, who was not accounted by his neighbours to be very wise, because he did needlessly kind things, told the factor to let the lassie bide, and delivered to herself, with his own hand, writing to the effect that Janet Balchrystie, in consideration of her lonely condition, was to be allowed the house for her lifetime, a cow's grass, and thirty pound sterling in the year as a charge on the estate. He drove down the cow himself, and having stalled it in the byre, he informed her of the fact over the yard dyke by word of mouth, for he never could be induced to enter her door. He was accounted to be 'gey an' queer' save by those who had tried making a bargain with him. But his farmers liked him, knowing him to be an easy man with those who had been really unfortunate, for he knew to what the year's crops of each had amounted, to a single chaldar and head of nowt.

Deep in her heart Janet Balchrystie cherished a great ambition. When the earliest blackbird awoke and began to sing, while it was yet grey twilight, Janet would be up and at her work. She had an ambition to be a great poet. No less than this would serve her. But not even her father had known, and no other had any chance of knowing. In the black leather chest which had been her mother's, upstairs, there was a slowly growing pile of manuscript, and the editor of the local paper received every other week a poem, longer or shorter, for his Poet's Corner, in an envelope with the New Dalry post-mark. He was an obliging editor, and generally gave the closely written manuscript to the senior office-boy, who had passed the sixth standard, to cut down, tinker the rhymes, and lop any superfluity of feet. The senior office-boy 'just spread himself,' as he said, and delighted to do the job in style. But there was a woman fading into a grey old-maidishness which had hardly ever been girlhood, who did not at all approve of these corrections. She endured them because over the signature of 'Heather Bell' it was a joy to see in the rich, close luxury of type her own poetry, even though it

might be a trifle tattered and tossed about by hands ruthless and alien—those, in fact, of the senior office-boy.

Janet walked every other week to the post-office at New Dalry to post her letters to the editor, but neither that great man nor yet the senior office-boy had any conception that the verses of their 'esteemed correspondent' were written by a woman too early old who dwelt alone at the back of Barbrax Long Wood.

One day Janet took a sudden but long-meditated journey. She went down by rail from the little station of the 'Huts' to the large town of Drum, thirty miles to the east. Here, with the most perfect courage and dignity of bearing, she interviewed a printer and arranged for the publication of her poems in their own original form, no longer staled and clapperclawed by the pencil of the senior office-boy. When the proof-sheets came to Janet, she had no way of indicating the corrections than by again writing the whole poem out in a neat print hand on the edge of the proof, and underscoring the words which were to be altered. This, when you think of it, is a very good way, when the happiest part of your life is to be spent in such concrete pleasures of hope, as were Janet's over the crackly sheets of the printer of Drum. Finally the book was produced, a small, rather thickish octavo, on sufficiently wretched grey paper which had suffered from want of thorough washing in the original paper-mill. It was bound in a peculiarly deadly blue, of a rectified Reckitt tint, which gave you dazzles in the eye at any distance under ten paces. Janet had selected this as the most appropriate of colours. She had also many years ago decided upon the title, so that Reckitt had printed upon it, back and side, 'The Heather Lintie,' while inside there was the plain acknowledgment of authorship, which Janet felt to be a solemn duty to the world, 'Poems by Janet Balchrystie, Barbrax Cottage, by New Dalry.' First she had thought of withholding her name and style; but on the whole, after the most prolonged consideration she felt that she was not justified in bringing about such a controversy as had once divided Scotland concerning that 'Great Unknown' who wrote the Waverley Novels.

Almost every second or third day Janet trod that long loch-side road to New Dalry for her proof-sheets, and returned them on the morrow corrected in her own way. Sometimes she got a lift from some farmer or carter, for she had worn herself with anxiety to the shadow of what she had once been, and her dry bleached hair became grey and greyer with the fervour of her devotion to letters.

By April the book was published, and at the end of this month, laid aside by sickness of the vague kind called locally 'a decline,' she took to her bed—rising only to lay a few sticks upon the fire from her store gathered in the autumn, or to brew herself a cup of tea—she waited for the tokens of her book's conquests in the great world of thought and men. She had waited so long for her recognition, and now it was coming. She felt that it would not be long before she was recognised as one of the singers of the world. Indeed, had she but known it, her recognition was already on its way.

In a great city of the north a clever young reporter was cutting open the leaves of *The Heather Lintie* with a hand almost feverishly eager.

'This is a perfect treasure. This is a find indeed. Here is my chance ready to my hand.'

His paper was making a specialty of 'exposures.' If there was anything weak and erring, anything particularly helpless and foolish which could make no stand for itself, *The Night Hawk* was on the pounce. Hitherto the Junior Reporter had never had a 'two column chance.' He had read—it was not much that he had read—Macaulay's too famous article on 'Satan' Montgomery, and not knowing that Macaulay lived to regret the spirit of that assault, he felt that if he could bring down *The Night Hawk* on *The Heather Lintie*, his fortune was made. So he sat down and he wrote, not knowing and not regarding a lonely woman's heart, to whom his word would be as the word of a God, in the lonely cottage lying in the lee of the Long Wood of Barbrax.

The Junior Reporter turned out a triumph of the New Journalism. 'This is a book which may be a genuine source of pride to every native of the ancient

province of Galloway,' he wrote. 'Galloway has been celebrated for black cattle and for wool—as also for a certain bucolic belatedness of temperament, but Galloway has never hitherto produced a poetess. One has arisen in the person of Miss Janet Bal— something or other. We have not an interpreter at hand, and so cannot wrestle with the intricacies of the authoress's name, which appears to be some Galwegian form of Erse or Choctaw. Miss Bal—and so forth—has a true fount of pathos and humour. In what touching language she chronicles the death of two young lambs which fell into one of the puddles they call rivers down there, and were either drowned or choked with the dirt—

'They were two bonny, bonny lambs, That played upon the daisied lea, And loudly mourned their woolly dams Above the drumly flowing Dee.'

'How touchingly simple,' continued the Junior Reporter, buckling up his sleeves to enjoy himself, and feeling himself born to be a Saturday Reviewer, 'mark the local colour, the wool and the dirty water of the Dee— without doubt a name applied to one of their bigger ditches down there. Mark also the over-fervency of the touching line,

'And loudly mourned their woolly dams,' which, but for the sex of the writer and her evident genius, might be taken for an expression of a strength hardly permissible even in the metropolis.'

The Junior Reporter filled his two columns and enjoyed himself in the doing of it. He concluded with the words, 'The authoress will make a great success. If she will come to the capital, where genius is always appreciated, she will, without doubt, make her fortune. Nay, if Miss Bal—, but again we cannot proceed for the want of an interpreter—if Miss B., we say, will only accept a position at Cleary's Waxworks and give readings from her poetry, or exhibit herself in the act of pronouncing her own name, she will be a greater draw in this city than Punch and Judy, or even the latest American advertising evangelist who preaches standing on his head.'

The Junior Reporter ceased here from very

admiration at his own cleverness in so exactly hitting the tone of the masters of his craft, and handed his manuscript in to the editor.

It was the gloaming of a long June day when Rob Affleck, the woodman over at Barbrax, having been at New Dalry with a cart of wood, left his horse on the roadside and ran over through Gavin's old short cut, now seldom used, to Janet's cottage with a paper in a yellow wrapper.

'Leave it on the step, and thank you kindly, Rob,' said a weak voice within, and Rob, anxious about his horse and his bed, did so without another word. In a moment or two Janet crawled to the door, listened to make sure that Rob was really gone, opened the door, and protruded a hand wasted to the hard flat bone—an arm that ought for her years to have been of full flesh and noble curves.

When Janet got back to bed it was too dark to see anything except the big printing at the top of the paper.

'Two columns of it!' said Janet, with great thankfulness in her heart, lifting up her soul to God who had given her the power to sing. She strained her prematurely old and weary eyes to make out the sense. 'A genuine source of pride to every native of the ancient province,' she read.

'The Lord be praised!' said Janet, in a rapture of devout thankfulness, 'though I never really doubted it,' she added, as though asking pardon for a moment's distrust. 'But I tried to write these poems to the glory of God and not to my own praise, and He will accept them and keep me humble under the praise of men as well as under their neglect.'

So clutching the precious paper close to her breast, and letting tears of thankfulness fall on the article—which, had they fallen on the head of the Junior Reporter, would have burnt like fire, she patiently awaited the coming dawn.

'I can wait till the morning now to read the rest,' she said.

So hour after hour, with her eyes wide, staring hard at the grey window squares, she waited the light from the east. About half-past two there was a stirring

and a moaning among the pines, and the roar of the sudden gust came with the breaking day through the dark arches. In the whirlwind there came a strange expectancy and tremor into the heart of the poetess, and she pressed the wet sheet of crumpled paper closer to her bosom, and turned to face the light. Through the spaces of the Long Wood of Barbrax there came a shining visitor, the Angel of the Presence, he who comes but once and stands a moment with a beckoning finger. Him she followed up through the wood.

They found Janet on the morning of the second day after, with a look so glad on her face and so natural an expectation in the unclosed eye, that Rob Affleck spoke to her and expected an answer. The Night Hawk was clasped to her breast with a hand that they could not loosen. It went to the grave with her body. The ink had run a little here and there, where the tears had fallen thickest.

God is more merciful than man.

5. THE SPLIT IN THE MARROW KIRK

Jiminy and Jaikie were two little boys. They played together at the bottom of a large and beautiful garden. Jaikie did not believe that there was another garden so large and fine in all the world. Jiminy said so, and he was the minister's son and had been at Dalmarnock where the five steeples are, with the stars sitting on the tops of them. The stars are the tops of steeples which one cannot see for the darkness of the night. In the daytime, just the other way about, one sees the steeples, but cannot see the stars. Jiminy was also the authority for these statements. He was, as we said before, a minister's son, and, of course, knew everything. Jaikie's father was an elder, and did not admire the father of Jiminy at all; but his son made it up by holding Jiminy infallible.

There was a great dispute in the little Kirk of the Marrow. Long ago, long before these boys were born, or their grandfathers either, a book had been carried up from England in an old soldier's satchel which had set all Scotland by the ears. Kirks had been split, ministers had been deposed, new denominations had been formed over the old soldier's wallet book. Now, a hundred years later, the little Kirk of the Marrow in the village of Muirgate was in the 'deed thraws' of a disruption. The Reverend Simon Adam, locally known as 'Maister Aydam,' with the larger portion of the congregation, was for following the majority of the congregations of the Kirk of the Marrow, scattered over the Southern Uplands, into the larger fold of one of the better-known evangelical communions of Scotland. Ebenezer Langbakkit, Jaikie's father, led the opposition to this union, and threatened to carry their dislike even to the extremity of extruding the minister from his manse and kailyard, and barring the door of the kirk in his face, because he had forsworn his ordination vows, and gone back from the pure doctrine and practice of the 'Marrow-men,' as laid down in the famous controversy by Thomas Boston and other precious and savoury divines.

Thus far the war of the Marrow Kirk of Muirgate.

But the two little boys wotted little of it as they played together in that large garden during the long-continued heats of the Dry Summer. The garden was cut up into squares by walks which ran at right angles to one another. There were square plots of gooseberry bushes, square wildernesses of pea-sticks, and square strawberry beds in that corner where it was forbidden for small, sweet-toothed boys to go. At the upper end an orchard ran right across, every tree in which was climbable, and a wall, with a flight of steps over into a field, bounded all. Great trees, generations old, surrounded the garden and orchard, and cast here and there throughout it circular plots of pleasant shade amid the garden squares. It was, said the wiseacres, too much buried in foliage to make the best of gardens. But it suited two small boys that summer very well.

The boys did not go to school. Jiminy Adam had a brief and terrible struggle with the Latin verb every morning in his father's study, whence he emerged to forget all about the matter for other twenty-three hours; but Jaikie had no call to go to the school at all, for there was no school-board officer in those days, the dominie was infirm and old, and Jaikie's father divided between plotting against Maister Aydam and a course of black, gloomy drinking in his own house.

Week after week the climax of discontent approached. The true Marrowmen, as Eby Langbakkit's party called themselves, were all grim men determined not to company with those who had but recently separated from an 'Erastian and Malignant' Establishment, and who had never purged themselves from their guilty compliance. Nor would they permit the kirk of bygone valiant pretestings to be longer desecrated by the services of a man like Mr. Adam, who had conformed to the too easy temper of the times.

Thus far had the matter gone when one day Jiminy and Jaikie played together by the orchard wall. They were very small boys, and as there were no girls about, or other boys to reproach them for the childishness, they played at building houses and living in them. Jiminy was architect, and directed the operations, ordering Jaikie about like a hod-carrier to

fetch and carry for him all day long. When he threw a load of stones at him disdainfully, Jaikie was in the seventh heaven of ecstasy. Jaikie adored all who abused him, if only they allowed him to worship them. Jiminy had no objection. Often Jaikie would have liked to inhabit for a little one of the splendid mansions which he toiled in the sweat of his brow to erect. But it was not to be. As soon as a plan was completed, after one discontented survey, Jiminy would kick down all their hard work and start over again on a new and improved plan. Once Jaikie begged Jiminy not to kick down a specially noble tower built with mud, which Jaikie had laboured like a Hebrew slave bonding in Egypt, to bring up from the river. Then Jiminy kicked Jaikie for interfering where he had no business, which sent that hero-worshipper into the seventh heaven of happiness.

Couched in his bunk at nights, beneath the little gable window in the attic, Jaikie could hear the confabulations of the Marrowmen who came to receive their instructions from that grim sectary, Eby Langbakkit. It was some time before Jaikie paid any heed to these gatherings. He had been accustomed to such silent and dour assemblies downstairs as long as he could remember, with a black bottle of whisky sitting in the middle of the table, and his father casting a wary-eye at each man as he took his dram to see that no advantage was taken. If there were, Ebenezer Langbakkit checked the offender sharply, as, indeed, he had every right to do, being an elder.

Lately, however, stirred to some attention by Jimmy's dark hints of plots and conspiracies, he had taken to crawling out of his bed every night and lying at the top of the ladder, a shivering little phantom, listening to the talk that went on beneath.

'Shall we be degradit and abolished,' said Jaikie's father, 'swallowed quick by the whore that sitteth on the Seven Hills?

Murmurs of applause. "Deed, they're little better!"

'Shall the truth-forsaking hireling of the flock lead away his silly sheep, and also keep possession of the sheep-fold? Nay, verily! The faithful must take and the

contending remnant must possess!'

All this was not much to the purpose, and Jaikie dovered over to sleep. When he awoke his father was giving more understandable directions.

'You, John Howieson, are to tak' three wi' you, an' lie in the trees at the foot o' the orchard; then when ye see Bell Girmory gaun doon to the village with a message—I'll see that she gangs—ye'll gang yer ways up and tak' possession o' the manse. The minister will no' be hame for the maitter o' an 'oor. He'll be preachin' at Cairn Edward, as I telled ye. Then yince in the manse, ye maun haud it against a' comers by virtue o' the deeds and charters that I gie ye. When he brings ye to the question, ye are to say to him that all his household goods will be cared for and delivered to him upon demand, and that a decent lodging has been bespoken for him in the house of Elspeth Mac-Clevver, that's a decent woman, an' clean, though no better than a Burgher.

'Meanwhile, the lave o' ye are to come wi' me an' we are in like manner to haud the kirk. Come weel providit, for we're to haud it a' day on Saturday, and a' the nicht likewise, till Zechariah Mosshaggs, that true servant of the Lord, shall come to preach the kirk vacant in the name of the Faithful Remnant of the Synod of the Marrowmen.'

Jaikie had not been asleep all this time. He listened as he never listened before, except when Jiminy was giving his orders and looking as if he were going to kick.

All night Jaikie lay awake till the early light brightened to another dewless morning, for the earth was dun and dusty with the parching of the sun. As soon as it was light, Jaikie slid down the trunk of the rowan tree which threw a convenient branch to his window, to make a staircase for a little boy in a hurry, who might not wish to disturb his father with his late bedding or his early rising. The bare legs of Jaikie paddled through the dust and over the burnt-up russet grass, across the dry bed of the burn to Jiminy's window. Here he whistled that peculiar call which Jiminy had revealed to him under the dreadful shadow

of night, in the dusky cavern of the Bloody Hand (known in the daytime as the manse potato house), a call which Jaikie believed to be connected with the black art, and in case of revealing the secret of which he was under solemn obligation, sealed with his blood, to cut his throat and afterwards to be kicked black and blue by Jiminy, who was a master of the darkest wizardry, according to his own account.

As he continued to whistle, a large sea-shell, pink inside, swung down from an upper window and impinged abruptly on his bare leg.

'Ow!' said Jaikie.

'Stop that horrid noise. That'll learn ye. You'll wakken my father!' said Jiminy, in his nightdress. 'What d'ye want at ony rate at this time in the mornin'?'

'Come doon an' I'll tell ye; I canna cry it up there.'

'Get away. I'm no' comin' doon in the middle o' the nicht,' said Jiminy, who had lapsed into the Doric of his play hours.

'O Jiminy, ye nicht come doon. It's an awfu'-like thing I hae to tell ye. It's aboot yer faither. Ye maun come doon the noo. I'll let ye kick me for hale five meenites gin ye like.'

Filial affection or the prospect of healthy leg-exercise brought Jiminy down with a run, and the two boys wandered off into the wood in close confabulation.

It was the Saturday morning of the plot. The minister who stood so near the brink of his extrusion was on his way home from Cairn Edward, where he had been 'daubing with untempered mortar,' as Eby Langbakkit said, by preaching in an Uncovenanted Kirk.

Round the corner of the orchard, dividing into two bands as they came, stole the Faithful Remnant to take possession of the kirk and manse into which Simon Adam was no more to come. Bell Girmory duly departed through the trees with her sun-bonnet on, in the direction of the village. She had a large basket over her arm.

John Howieson and his henchmen took the manse in front and rear; but the front door, which had only been shut at night and never locked even then,

was now bolted and barred. The back door was also firmly locked, and when John Howieson went to lift the kitchen window, the secret of which he knew from having courted (unsuccessfully) numerous manse lasses, Bell's predecessors, he recoiled in sudden amazement. He had looked down the bell mouth of an ancient blunderbuss, into which the sun shone so plain that, as he said afterwards, 'Man, I could hae coontit the lead draps at the buddom o' her!'

This weapon of war was in the hands of a militant small boy. The council of war had forgotten to reckon with Jiminy; still more, they had not taken Jaikie into account. They soon had to do so, for Jaikie was under orders from 'General' Jiminy, and had every intention of obeying them.

Ebenezer Langbakkit had gone openly with half a dozen others to take possession of the kirk at twelve of the clock. He had made a key for the lock, and anticipated no difficulty. His surprise was great when he found that there was a key already in the lock on the inside. He tried the southern door with a similar effect. He put his fingers through the hole by which, as in a stable door, the inside latch was lifted, but within that aperture his finger encountered something hard and cold. He applied his eye, and, just as John Howieson was doing at that moment over at the manse, he found himself looking down the barrel of a gun. The sensation is not an agreeable one even to an elder of the Kirk of the Marrow. Looking through the window precariously, from the branches of a neighbouring tree, his surprise was not lessened and his anger greatly increased by seeing his own son, Jaikie, marching up and down the aisle, with a gun on his shoulder, as proud and erect as a veteran of Ramillies.

'Open the door this instant, Jaikie!' he thundered, black anger sitting on him like the night. But Jaikie answered not a word. He had his orders from Jiminy.

From window to window thundered Eby Langbakkit, but there was no way of entrance.

At each window and door stood the inevitable small boy with the large gun, and the reflection lay heavily on all the party that a small boy with a man's

gun is more to be feared than a large man with a boy's gun. A commonplace thought, but one with practical bearing at that moment to the sect of Eby Langbakkit.

Then Eby Langbakkit swore a great oath that in that kirk he would be, though he swung for it.

'Bring me the poother flask!' he ordered; but no man gave to him, for they feared what they saw in his face.

'Ye'll no' hurt the laddie. He's your ain son,' said one to him.

'Then he's no' yours,' he answered, blackly; 'so mind your ain business.'

He got his own powder flask, inserted a slow match into it, and placed it beneath the door. Then he stood apart waiting for the event. There was a loud report, an instant rush of white smoke, and the side of the flask buried itself in the tree close to the elder's head. When the smoke cleared away the kirk door lay on its side, having fallen heavily inward. There was no small boy to be seen from end to end of the empty kirk. Langbakkit sprang forward in fierce anger that his son had escaped without his deserts. The silence and chill of the empty kirk alone met him.

He was about to step over the fallen door, when out from beneath the heavy iron - studded oak he saw stealing a tiny thread of red. Something struck him to the heart. He pressed his hand on his breast and stood, not daring to go farther.

'Mr. Langbakkit, what is the meaning of this?' said the calm voice of the minister, Mr. Adam. No one replied. The protest died out at the sight of that faint streak of liquid scarlet and the fear of what lay unseen beneath the fallen door.

'Saunders Grierson and David Robb, I command you, help me to lift the door of the house of God!' said the minister.

The two men named approached awkwardly, and between them the three lifted the heavy door. Beneath it lay the crushed and torn body of a boy, still clasping firmly an iron tube thrust into a rough lump of wood. He must have stood quite close to the door when the flask exploded, for the explosion had torn the clothes

almost off his poor body.

The minister raised him tenderly in his arms, and wiped his face very gently with his napkin.

The sight of this seemed to awaken Ebenezer Langbakkit.

'Give me ma dead,' he said, suddenly and roughly. 'The Lord has stricken me. I am a man of violence!'

So saying he strode away, bowed with his burden.

Now, this is properly the end of the story of the split in the Marrow Kirk, but for the sake of some who may love Jaikie, it is enough to say that, though sore wounded, he did not die. When Jiminy went to see him, he lay a long time silently holding his friend's hand.

'I couldna keep them oot, Jiminy, but I did my best. Ye'll no' hae to kick me for't when I get better.'

And Jiminy never kicked him any more. When it was time for Jiminy to go to college he had for companion, at Maister Adam's expense, a lame lad with a beautiful countenance. His name was Jaikie.

6. THE PROBATIONER

Thomas Todd has just received a call to the Kirk of Dowiedens, somewhere over on Tweedside, so he can hardly be called a minister of our countryside; but there need be no objection if the lad is allowed to say his say among the rest, for he belongs to this part of the country, and his father before him. He has been a long time a probationer—six year and more—so that there were some that said that he would never wag his head but in another man's pulpit. But Tam cheated them all, for he is to be ordained to the pastoral charge of Dowiedens, a fortnight come Friday. It's not to say a large parish, being wide scattered, with as much exercise for the legs as for the brains in looking after the fowk. There are but few parishioners, only, as Tammas says, 'they are as ill to please as Saint George's itsel!' Tammas has been bidding with us at Drumquhat; he's a great favourite with the mistress.

Many is the girdleful of crumpy cakes that she will bake for him, when I dare not suggest the like to her—no, not for my life.

'Hae ye nae sense ava', Saunders MaWhurr, to come fleechin' wi' me to bake ye short-breed an' sic like, wi' the pigs to feed an' the hervesters comin' in gilravagin' wi' hunger at six o'clock? Think shame o' yer bairnly weys, man!'

But if Tammas Todd comes ben an' sits doon, the wife'll gie her ban's a dicht, slip aff her apron, an' come in to hear aboot Enbro' an' the laddie's landladies, and their awfu' wickednesses wi' the coals an' the butter, till she'll say, 'Come awa' to the kitchen, an' I can be bakin' a bit sweet cake for the tea—the guidman's fell fond o't!'

The Almichty in His wonderful providence made mony curious things, but nane o' them so queer an' contrary as the weemen-fowk. This is what I says to myself, but I have more sense than to say it aloud. I'll warrant that King Solomon among his other wisdom learned to haud his tongue before he got as many as three hunder wives.

This is what the laddie said sitting on the table at the end of the bake-board. Tammas is gettin' on for

thirty, but in some things it's strange to see him so keen of sweet things. He'll take up a bit o' the dough that the wife is rolling out wi' her wooden pin, and he eats it like a laddie hame from the school; but my certie, I would like to see ony one of her ain try that; he would get a ring on the side of the head that would learn him to leave his mither alone when she was baking.

But Tammas could aye get the soft side of the mistress.

'We'll no' hae to ca' ye 'Tammas' when ye get to be a placed minister,' says she, knowing brawly that the lad'll be 'Tammas' to all at Drumquhat till his dying day.

'If ye dinna,' says he, 'I'll never look near the bit.' Tammas can speak the English as weel as onybody, but when he gets among his own folk he prides himself on lapsing, so to speak, into the broadest Gallowa'. He laughs at me for being fond of writing in proper English. He says that I need not try it, for when I do my best, every sentence has got the 'Gallowa' lug-mark' plain on it. But this is his nonsense.

'Ye maun hae had some queer bars, Tammas, in your time,' said the mistress.

Tammas gied a bit smile, and said with the pleased look that a man has when he's accused of something that he likes to hear about, like a pussy strokit the richt way—I mind weel mysel' walking three miles to be tormented about Jessie Scott before we were married— 'Nocht to speak aboot,' says he, 'but of coorse, a man canna gang aboot six year wi' a pokemantie withoot seein' somethin' o' baith sides o' life.'

'Ye'll hae been in a feck o' manses in yer time, Tammas?'

'Ay, Mrs. MaWhurr,' says he, 'and let me tell you, that there's no sic hooses as manses in Scotland, or ony-where else—that is,' he says, 'nine oot o' every ten o' them. I wad be an ingrate to say onything else, for in nearly every instance I have been treated, no like a puir probationer prcachin' for his guinea fee and gaun off like a beggar wi' his awmus on Monday mornin', but

like a verra prince. I hae memories o' the mistresses o' the manses o' Scotlan' that will never be forgotten!'

'An' o' the dochters o' the manses?' says I, just above my breath. Then there was a warm colour rose to the cheek of the minister-elect of the Dowiedens, and mantled on his brow, but he said bravely:

'Ay, an' the lasses were kind to me, they were that.'

'When is't to be?' says I.

'Let the lad alane, can ye no, Saunders MaWhurr; ye're never dune wi' yer fule talk,' says my wife. She had been talking even on the whole night, and I had said maybe a dozen words. But I let that pass.

'Of coorse, among so mony there were bun' to be some queer yins?' suggested my wife, fishing in the young man's shallow water. The wife can draw most folks, but Saunders MaWhurr has leaved ower lang wi' her not to see through her wiles.

'Weel, I mind,' says Tammias Todd, 'o' yince being askit to preach at a certain place; I'll no say where, nor I'll no tell ye gin ye speer. It was maybes half-past seeven when I got to the manse, an' I had had a long journey.

'Ye'll be tired an' hungry,' said the mistress. 'Ye'll be wantin' to gang sune to your bed.' Hungry I was, but to gang sune to your bed is no so common amang us lads wi' the black bag; but I said nocht, and took my cup o' tea, an' some bread and butter. 'Tak' plenty o' the bread an' butter,' she says, 'we hae nae cauld meat.' I wad hae been gled to see some o' that same, but it wasna for me to say onything.

'About nine I saw some o' them gettin' partic'lar fidgety like, gaun oot an' in, yin sayin', 'Is Mr. Todd's room ready? 'an' another yin rinnin' doon stairs cryin' to somebody in the kitchen, 'Can ye no wait awe?'

'Then I was askit to tak' the buik, an' as sune as ever I gat up the mistress brocht in my bedroom can'le. 'Yer room's ready whenever ye like,' she says. This was what I wad ca' a solid kind o' hint, aboot as braid as it's lang, an' it was mair than enouch for me, so I took baith hint an' can'le, an' gaed my ways.

'But I hadna been ten meenutes in my room when

I took a thocht to gie my sermons for the morn a bit look, but I fand that I had left my Bible in the room where I had my tea. So withoot a thocht doon I gaed to get the buik, an' when I opened the door what do ye think I saw?'

We were silent every one.

'Weel, I saw the hale family sittin' doon to a hot supper!'

'Davert! that coves a', said my wife, her hospitable soul up in arms. 'An' tell me, whatever did ye do?'

'Well,' said Tammas Todd, 'I hae lookit in every buik o' Guid Mainners, an' in a' the Guides to Polite Society, but I canna find a word in ony yin o' them that tells me what I should hae dune.'

'I daresay no, ye were in no polite society that nicht!' said Mrs. MaWhurr; 'but tell me, what did ye do?'

'Weel,' said Tammas, 'I juist cam' my ways up the stair again, an' took the lave o' the sandwiches that the minister's wife, whas hoose I had left that mornin', had kindly pitten up for me.'

'The Lord be than kit, they're no a' alike,' said my wife, devoutly.

'Na, far frae that,' said Tammas Todd; 'deed I'm ashamed to tell ye o' this yin, but there's no sic anither in a' Scotlan', I'se warrant. An' when I gaed back to the leddy's hoose that gied me the sandwiches, as I did on the followin' Setterday, she was like to greet to think on the wey that I had been used. She aye said that I minded her o' her ain boy that she had lost— 'My puir lad!' she says, an' she cam' near takin' me roun' the neck, she was that sair pitten aboot.'

'Maybes the dochter did it a'thegither,' says I, for a wee bird had brocht the news that the manse at Dowiedens wasna lang to be withoot a mistress.

'Saunders MaWhurr,' began my wife in the voice that she uses when the byre lass is ower lang in bringin' in the kye.

'Never mind him, Mrs. MaWhurr, he maun hae been a gey boy himsel' to hae the lasses so constant in his mind!' said Tammas, which was a most uncalled-for

observe.

'Ye'll be a' by wi' probationering noo, Tammas?' says I, to gie him a new lead.

'Weel, I had a sma' experience Sabbath eight days, nae farther gane,' said he. 'I had occasion to look in at the kirk offices to see old 'Jeremiah' —him that sen's us to oor preachin' places, ye ken, an' says he, 'Man, ye micht gang doon to Elvanby, it'll no' be oot o' yer wey gin ye're gaun doon to the Border Country onywey

'On yer wey to the manse whaur the fowk tak' ye roon the neck, nae doot!' says I.

My wife gied me a look that wad hae speaned a foal, but Tammas Todd never let on.

'So I gaed doon wi' the efternoon train to Elvanby, which is a biggish place on the railway line. I got there ower in the forenicht. It was as dark as the guid-man's snuff-box, an' rainin' in sheets. I had a heavy bag, for I had my buiks to prepare for my ordination.'

'An' yer co-ordination too, no doot,' says I, 'for wi' you ministers I hae noticed that the ordination comes first, an' syne the co-ordination, but ye're maistly sunest ready for the co-ordination. The last first, that's your motto,' says I.

'I dinna understand a word ye're sayin',' says he, 'ye're haiverin', guidman.'

'Dinna be ashamed o't, my young man,' says I. 'It's a hantle easier gettin' a lass than a kirk ony day!' says I.

'And that's a true word,' said the probationer of six years standing.

'So,' continued Tammas, 'I speered at the porter at the station the wey to the manse. 'It's at the fit o' the Back Street,' says he, 'but somebody telled me that he was no' leevin' in't noo; but gang ye ower there to the shop o' yin o' the elders, an' he'll be sure to ken.'

The master was oot, but a laddie telled me that the minister was leevin' aboot twa mile oot the Carlisle Road, but he didna think that he was at hame, for there had been naething sent up to the hoose for a month. This was real cheerfu' hearin' for me wi' my heavy bag and an umbrella, but there was naething for it but to

gang on. So I trudged away doon the Carlisle Road, glaur to the oxters, an' changin' my bag frae the yae side to the ither as if I war swingin' it for a wager. I speered at every hoose, but the answer was aye, 'It's about a mile farther doon!' They maun be poor road surveyors in that direction, for their miles are like sea miles for length.

'At the hinner en' I fand the hoose, by scartin' a match an' readin' the plate on the gate. I rang the bell, but a' was in darkness. I stood a gey while in the rain, an' I declare that my thochts were no ministerial.

'Presently a wunda' gaes up somewhere in the garret stories, an' a heid pops oot.

'Fa' be you?' it says.

'I'm the minister that's to preach for Mr. Fergusson the morn,' says I, 'an' I'll thank you to let me in oot o' the rain.'

'I ken nocht about you!' it says, and doon gaed the wunda'.

'Noo I tell you that if that woman hadna letten me in at that time o' nicht I wad hae driven a stane through the gless, if they had had me afore the Presbytery for't. But in a wee the door opened an' the lassie lets me in.

'She had just come from the Aberdeenshire Deeside that day, and was as great a stranger as myself. But yince in, she did verra weel for my comfort. But as she kenned naething about the hours of worship I had to gang awa' doon to the toon early on the neest mornin' to find oot when the service was. Then back up I cam' again for the sermons an' my breakfast. The service was at twal, an' aboot half-past eleeven I was at the kirk, an' sittin' waitin' in the vestry for somebody to come to speak to me, for I had spoken to nobody bena the servant lass frae Aberdeen an' the shop laddie that I had met on the street.

'As I sat in the vestry I could hear them firslin aboot the door, an' the fowk comin' in, but naebody lookit near me till maybe five meenites to twal'. Then a man cam' in that I took to be the precentor, so I gied him what I usually gied to toun kirks, a psalm, a paraphrase, an' twa hymns. He took them, put on his glesses, an' lookit at my writin' gye scornfu' like.

'Hymns!' he says. 'Na, we sing nae hymns here—na—an' we're nane sae carin' aboot paraphrases, neyther!'

'This was a thocht discouragin', but I said that I would gladly gie him all the four psalms, that I could easily find psalms to suit my subject.

'Ay, an' I think they micht hae served ye too,' says he.

'I went up to the pulpit and preached, but what I said I do not ken; I had gotten my sermon frae the precentor, and felt juist like a schule-boy that has come to the dominie withoot his lesson. When I had feenished I thocht that some o' the elders wad speak to me, but not a one showed face. I gaed into the vestry an'got my hat, an' so back to the manse on the Carlisle Road.

'A laddie met me at the gate. 'You're the minister that preached the day—hae!' says he. It was a note frae somebody I didna ken tellin' me that I was expected to address the Sabbath Schule that efternune at three o'clock. So I slippit doon, an' fand that the schule only gaed in at that hour. So I had to wait sittin' by mysel' till aboot the half-hour. Then a man cam' an' chappit me on the shoother, 'Ye'll hae twunt' meenites,' he says.

'Twunt' meenites?' says I, no seein' his drift.

'Ay,' he says, 'to address the bairns!'

'So I talked to the bairns for a wee, a job I aye likit, an' at the end I pat up a prayer and sat for maybes half a meenit efter withoot lookin' up. Wull you believe me,' said the probationer, 'that when I liftit my heid there wasna a body, bairn, teacher, or superintendent, in the place?'

'So yince mair gaed I back alang that weary Carlisle Road withoot a word frae leevin' craitur.

'Heaven do so to me an' more also,' said I to mysel', 'if I ever mislippen a probationer when yince I'm settled in the Dowiedens!' Next mornin' I raise gye an' early, an' shook off the dust of Elvan by frae my feet for a testimony again an unkindly parish, an' a minister and people that muzzled into silence the ox that treadeth out the corn, though I fear that I gicd them mair cauff than corn that day.'

And nae wunner,' said Mrs. MaWhurr.

'They wad just be blate to pit themsel's forrit,Tammas!' said I. 'They wadna like to speak to a strainge minister.'

'Strainge minister here, strainge minister there. I'll gang nae mair to yon toon!' says he. 'They made me fine an' blate. When I'm settled in the Dowiedens——'

'An' mairrit to that wifie's dochter that pat her airms... '

'Haud yer tongue, man!' cried my mistress to me in a mainer that couldna be ca'ed mair nor ceevil.

7. THE LAMMAS PREACHING

I further intimate,' said the minister, 'that I will preach this evening at Cauldshaws, and my text will be from the ninth chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes and the tenth verse, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'

'Save us,' said Janet MacTaggart, 'he's clean forgotten 'if it be the Lord's wull.' Maybe he'll be for gaun whether it's His wull or no'—he's a sair masterfu' man, the minister; but he comes frae the Machars, an' kens little aboot the jealous God we hae amang the hills o' Gallowa!'

The minister continued, in the same high, level tone in which he did his preaching, 'There are a number of sluggards who lay the weight of their own laziness on the Almighty, saying, 'I am a worm and no man— how should I strive with my Maker?' whenever they are at strife with their own sluggishness. There will be a word for all such this evening at the farmtown of Cauldshaws, presently occupied by Gilbert M'Kissock— public worship to begin at seven o'clock.'

The congregation of Barnessock kirk tumbled amicably over its own heels with eagerness to get into the kirkyaird in order to settle the momentous question, 'Wha's back was he on the day?'

Robert Kirk, Carsethorn, had a packet of peppermint lozenges in the crown of his 'lum' hat— deponed to by Elizabeth Douglas or Barr, in Barnbogie, whose husband, Weelum Barr, put on the hat of the aforesaid Robert Kirk by mistake for his own, whereupon the peppermints fell to the floor and rolled under the pews in most unseemly fashion. Elizabeth Kirk is of opinion that this should be brought to the notice of Session, she herself always taking her peppermint while genteelly wiping her mouth with the corner of her handkerchief. Robert Kirk, on being put to the question, admits the fact, but says that it was his wife put them there to be near her hand.

The minister, however, ready with his word, brought him to shame by saying, 'O Robert, Robert, that was just what Adam said, 'The woman Thou gavest

me, she gave me to eat!' The aforesaid Robert Kirk thinks that it is meddling with the original Hebrew to apply this to peppermints, and also says that Elizabeth Kirk is an impudent besom, and furthermore that, as all the country well knows (Here the chronicler omits much matter actionable in the civil courts of the realm).

'Janet,' said the minister to his housekeeper, 'I am to preach tonight at Cauldshaws on the text,

'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'

'I ken,' said Janet, 'I saw it on yer desk. I pat it ablow the clock for fear the wun's o' heeven micht blaw it awa' like chaff, an' you couldna do wantin' it!'

'Janet MacTaggart,' said the minister, tartly, 'bring in the denner, and do not meddle with what does not concern you.'

Janet could not abide read sermons; her natural woman rose against them. She knew, as she had said, that God was a jealous God, and, with regard to the minister, she looked upon herself as His vicegerent.

'He's young an' terrable ram-stam an' opeenionated —fu' o' buik-lear, but wi' little gracious experience. For a' that, the root o' the maitter's in 'im,' said Janet, not unhopefully.

'I'm gaun to preach at Cauldshaws, and my text's 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,'" said the minister to the precentor that afternoon, on the manse doorstep.

'The Lord's no' in a' his thochts. I'll gang wi' the lad mysel',' said the precentor.

Now, Galloway is so much out of the world that the Almighty has not there lifted His hand from reward and punishment, from guiding and restraining, as He has done in big towns where everything goes by machinery. Man may say that there is no God when he only sees a handbreadth of smoky heaven between the chimney-pots; but out on the fields of oats and bear, and up on the screes of the hillsides, where the mother granite sticks her bleaching ribs through the heather, men have reached great assurance on this and other matters.

The burns were running red with the mighty July

rain when Douglas Maclellan started over the meadows and moors to preach his sermon at the farmtown of Cauldshaws. He had thanked the Lord that morning in his opening prayer for 'the bounteous rain wherewith He had seen meet to refresh His weary heritage.'

His congregation silently acquiesced, 'for what,' said they, 'could a man from the Machars be expected to ken about meadow hay?'

When the minister and the precentor got to the foot of the manse loaning, they came upon the parish ne'er-do-weel, Ebie Kirgan, who kept himself in employment by constantly scratching his head, trying to think of something to do, and whose clothes were constructed on the latest sanitary principles of ventilation. The ruins of Ebie's hat were usually tipped over one eye for enlarged facilities of scratching in the rear.

'If it's yer wull, minister, I'll come to hear ye the nicht. It's drawing to mair rain, I'm thinkin'!' said the Scarecrow.

I hope the discourse may be profitable to you, Ebenezer, for, as I intimated this morning, I am to preach from the text, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'

'Ay, minister,' said Ebie, relieving his right hand, and tipping his hat over the other eye to give his left free play. So the three struck over the fields, making for the thorn tree at the corner, where Robert Kirk's dyke dipped into the standing water of the meadow.

'Do you think ye can manage it, Maister Maclellan?' said the precentor. 'Ye're wat half-way up the leg already.'

'An' there's sax feet o' black moss water in the Laneburn as sure as I'm a leevin' sowl,' added Ebie Kirgan.

I'm to preach at Cauldshaws, and my text is, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might!' said the minister, stubbornly glooming from under the eaves of his eyebrows as the swarthy men from the Machars are wont to do. His companions said no more. They came to Camelon Lane, where usually Robert Kirk had a leaping pole on either bank to assist

the traveller across, but both poles had gone down the water in the morning to look for Robert's meadow hay.

Tak' care, Maister Maclellan, ye'll be in deep water afore ye ken. O man, ye had far better turn!

The precentor stood up to his knees in water on what had once been the bank, and wrung his hands. But the minister pushed steadily ahead into the turbid and sluggish water.

'I canna come, oh, I canna come, for I'm a man that has a family.'

'It's no' your work; stay where ye are,' cried the minister, without looking over his shoulder; 'but as for me, I'm intimated to preach this night at Cauldshaws, and my text...'

Here he stepped into a deep hole, and his text was suddenly shut within him by the gurgle of moss water in his throat. His arms rose above the surface like the black spars of a windmill. But Ebie Kirgan sculled himself swiftly out, swimming with his shoeless feet, and pushed the minister before him to the further bank—the water gushing out of rents in his clothes as easily as out of the gills of a fish.

The minister stood with unshaken confidence on the bank. He ran peat water like a spout in a thunder plump, and black rivulets of dye were trickling from under his hat down his brow and dripping from the end of his nose.

'Then you'll not come any farther?' he called across to the precentor.

'I canna, oh, I canna; though I'm most awfu' wullin'. Kirsty wad never forgie me gin I was to droon.

'Then I'll e'en have to raise the tune myself—though three times 'Kilmarnock' is a pity,' said the minister, turning on his heel and striding away through the shallow sea, splashing the water as high as his head with a kind of headstrong glee which seemed to the precentor a direct defiance of Providence. Ebie Kirgan followed half a dozen steps behind. The support of the precentor's lay semi-equality taken from him, he began to regret that he had come, and silently and ruefully plunged along after the minister through the waterlogged meadows. They came in time to the foot of

Robert Kirk's march dyke, and skirted it a hundred yards upward to avoid the deep pool in which the Laneburn waters were swirling. The minister climbed silently up the seven-foot dyke, pausing a second on the top to balance himself for his leap to the other side. As he did so Ebie Kirgan saw that the dyke was swaying to the fall, having been weakened by the rush of water on the farther side. He ran instantly at the minister, and gave him a push with both hands which caused Mr. Maclellan to alight on his feet clear of the falling stones. The dyke did not so much fall outward as settle down on its own ruins. Ebie fell on his face among the stones with the impetus of his own eagerness. He arose, however, quickly— only limping slightly from what he called a bit chack on the leg between two stones.

'That was a merciful Providence, Ebenezer,' said the minister, solemnly; 'I hope you are duly thankful'

'Dod, I am that!' replied Ebie, scratching his head vigorously with his right hand and rubbing his leg with his left. 'Gin I hadna gi'en ye that dunch, ye nicht hae preachen nane at Cauldshaws this nicht.'

They now crossed a fairly level clover field, dank and laid with wet. The scent of the clover rose to their nostrils with almost overpowering force. There was not a breath of air. The sky was blue and the sun shining. Only a sullen roar came over the hill, soundine in the silence like the rush of a train over a far-away viaduct.

'What is that?' queried the minister, stopping to listen.

Ebie took a brisk sidelong look at him.

'I'm some dootsome that'll be the Skyreburn coming doon aft o' Cairnsmuir!'

The minister tramped unconcernedly on. Ebie Kirgan stared at him.

'He canna ken what a 'Skyreburn warnin' is—he'll be thinkin' it's some bit Machars burn that the laddies set their whurlie mills in. But he'll turn richt eneuch when he sees Skyreburn roarin' reed in a Lammas flood, I'm thinkin'!'

They took their way over the shoulder of the hill in the beautiful evening, leaning eagerly forward to get the first glimpse of the cause of that deep and resonant

roar. In a moment they saw below them a narrow rock-walled gully, ten or fifteen yards across, filled to the brim with rushing water. It was not black peat water like the Camelon Lane, but it ran red as keel, flecked now and then with a revolving white blur as one of the Cauldshaws sheep spun downward to the sea, with four black feet turned pitifully up to the blue sky.

Ebie looked at the minister. 'He'll turn noo if he's at the water up and down the roaring stream. On a hill above, the farmer of Cauldshaws, having driven all his remaining sheep together, sat down to watch. Seeing the minister, he stood up and excitedly waved him back. But Douglas Maclellan from the Machars never gave him a look, and his shouting was of less effect than if he had been crying to an untrained collie.

The minister looked long up the stream, and at a point where the rocks came very close together, and many stunted pines were growing, he saw one which, having stood on the immediate brink, had been so much undercut that it leaned over the gully like a fishing-rod. With a keen glance along its length, the minister, jamming his dripping soft felt hat on the back of his head, was setting foot on the perilous slope of the uneven red-brown trunk, when Ebie Kirgan caught him sharply by the arm.

'It's no' for me to speak to a minister at ordinar' times,' he stammered, gathering courage in his desperation; 'but, oh, man, it's fair murder to try to gang ower that water!'

The minister wrenched himself free, and sprang along the trunk with wonderful agility.

'I'm intimated to preach at Cauldshaws this night, and my text is, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might!'" he shouted.

He made his way up and up the slope of the fir tree, which, having little grip of the rock, dipped and swayed under his tread. Ebie Kirgan fell on his knees and prayed aloud. He had not prayed since his stepmother boxed his ears for getting into bed without saying his prayers twenty years ago. This had set him against it. But he prayed now, and to infinitely more purpose than his minister had recently done. But when

the climber had reached the branchy top, and was striving to get a few feet farther, in order to clear the surging linn before he made his spring, Ebie rose to his feet, leaving his prayer unfinished. He sent forth an almost animal shriek of terror. The tree roots cracked like breaking cables and slowly gave way, an avalanche of stones plumped into the whirl, and the top of the fir crashed downwards on the rocks of the opposite bank.

'Oh, man, call on the name of the Lord!' cried Ebie Kirgan, the ragged preacher, at the top of his voice.

Then he saw something detach itself from the tree as it rebounded, and for a moment rise and fall black against the sunset. Then Ebie the Outcast fell on his face like a dead man.

In the white coverleted 'room' of the farm town of Cauldshaws, a white-faced lad lay with his eyes closed, and a wet cloth on his brow. A large-boned, red-cheeked, motherly woman stole to and fro with a foot as light as a fairy. The sleeper stirred and tried to lift an unavailing hand to his head. The mistress of Cauldshaws stole to his bedside as he opened his eyes. She laid a restraining hand on him as he strove to rise.

'Let me up,' said the minister, 'I must away, for I'm intimated to preach at Cauldshaws, and my text is, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'

'My bonny man,' said the goodwife, tenderly, 'you'll preach best on the broad o' yer back this mony a day, an' when ye rise your best text will be, 'He sent from above, He took me, and drew me out of many waters!'

8. THE TRAGEDY OF DUNCAN DUNCANSON, SCHOOLMASTER

Duncan Duncanson, parochial schoolmaster in the parish of Nether Dullarg, stood at the door of his school-house, shading his eyes with his hand. He looked down the road and up the road, but no one was in sight. Not a leaf moved that breathless July morning. It was yet too early for the scholars to come, and indeed being high haytime the dominie did not expect a large attendance. He was not watching the stray collie puppy which made noisy demonstrations against the bluebottles near the water-spout at the foot of the playground. He was looking out for a tall girl carrying a black bag. To his mind she had delayed too long, and he was muttering what seemed by the gruff tones to be threats, but which was in reality something much milder. 'Never was there sic a lassie; she canna even come straight back from the heid o' the street!' he said, complainingly. 'There's no' a dowg in the Dullarg but she maun clap, an' no' a pussy sleepin' in the sun but she maun cross the road to stroke. She gets hersel' fair covered wi' dirt playin' wi' the laddies; she'll even set doon the black bag to play for keeps wi' the boys at the bools—an' her comin' on for fifteen.'

He sighed as though this were a deep grief to him, and a tear stood, with a kind of melancholy entirely unsuited to the slightness of the occasion, in his unsteady eye of watery blue. But it was not at all the shortcomings of the lassie that filled his heart. He kept muttering under his breath:

'If my Flora had but had her ain—shame to you, Duncan Duncanson, shame to you, shame to you, she nicht hae been a dochter o' the manse.'

Suddenly there was a glint as of sunshine in a shady place among the trees at the foot of the inclined slope of beaten earth which was called the playground. So steep was it, that when a scholar fell anywhere upon it he rolled over and over till brought up by the dyke. A tall girl came up the steps with a hop, skip, and jump, took the dominie round the neck in a discomposing manner, swung him on his heels as on a pivot, and

pushed him into the school.

'There,' she said, 'that's the last time that I gang for your bag. I wonder that you are not ashamed to sen' your daughter to the public-hoose for a black bag that every bairn kens what's in, every Tuesday and Friday, an' you the maister!'

Duncan Duncanson stood knitting his broad smooth brow, and clasping and unclasping his hands nervously. But he said nothing. His attention was irresolutely divided between his daughter, who stood before him with arms akimbo, the image of a petty tyrant, and the black bag which more and more strongly drew his gaze. 'I'll slip ower,' he said, 'an' see gin there's a big eneuch coal on the fire to keep it in!' So, taking the black bag in his hand, he went out like a chidden child glad to escape from observation. The girl maintained her dignified position till he was out of sight, then threw herself down on the hacked and ink-stained desk and cried as if her heart would break.

'Oh, my faither, my faither,' she sobbed, 'an' him yince a minister.'

When the dominie returned, with a flush on his cheek which slowly ebbed away, he found his girl in the midst of a riotous game of 'steal the bonnets,' which was only played at by the aristocrats of the school. Flora Duncanson was easily empress both in the school-house and in the school of the Nether Dullarg; and except when her father took one of his occasional turns of wild and ungovernable temper after too close devotion to the black bag which he had returned from locking in its skeleton cupboard, she was also the mistress of the master.

Every one in Nether Dullarg knew the history of Duncan Duncanson. He had taught nearly all the younger portion of them, for it was many years since he was appointed parish teacher in Nether Dullarg, long before Mr. Pitbye came to be minister. Duncan Duncanson was college bred. More than that, he had been a minister, and no 'stickit' minister either, but duly licensed, ordained, and inducted—also, alas! deposed. There had been a black bag even in those early days, as Duncan Duncanson knew to his cost. His

had been the good seed sown among the abundance of thorns. These two, thorns and wheat, grew up together into a deadly crop, and together were cut down in that terrible day of reckoning when the presbytery of Pitscottie solemnly deposed Duncan Duncanson, sometime minister of the parish of Shaws, from the office of the ministry of the Kirk of Scotland.

Then the presbytery of that day adjourned to the Gordon Arms to wash down their presbyterial dinner with plentiful jorums of toddy, and Duncan Duncanson sat for the last time in his study in the manse of the Shaws, sipping and filling the demon bottle which he carried like a familiar spirit in his black bag. This was his Day of Judgment; and the hopes of his youth, the aspirations of his middle life, the forecasts of a quiet age were all consumed in the flaming wrath of it. This was all because the Reverend Duncan Duncanson had fallen down one Sabbath day at the front door of the Shaws manse. There were those in the presbytery who had often fallen down at their back doors, but then this made a great difference, and they all prayed fervently for the great sinner and backslider who had slidden at his front door in the sight of men. The moderator, who in the presbytery had called Duncan everything that he could lay his tongue to, reflected as he drove home that he had let him off far too easily. Then he stooped down and felt in the box of his gig if the two-gallon 'greybeard' from the Gordon Arms were sitting safely on its own bottom. So much responsibility made him nervous on a rough road.

Duncan Duncanson, no longer Reverend, at once returned to his native village and to the house of his father and mother, the daily cause and witness of their grey-hairs whitening to the winter of the grave. They had a little house of their own, and it had not taken all their slender store to put their lad through college; for, save in the matter of the black bag and its inmate, Duncan Duncanson was neither spendthrift nor prodigal. Before he left the Shaws he was to have been married to the daughter of the neighbouring minister, but in the wild upheaval of that earthquake shock she obediently gave Duncan up as soon as the parish had

given him up; and in time married a wealthy farmer who did not come sober home from market for twenty years.

In his own village Duncan was looked upon with an odd kind of respect. He was thought to have been led astray, though this was not the case—the devil, together with the weak chin and unstable eye, having been leading enough. He was looked on as 'byordnar' clever, 'a dungeon o' learnin'.' So, after some years, when the parochial school fell vacant, the minister who had baptized him, and who had helped him lamely with his rusty scraps of Latin and Greek (Latin as far as 'Omnis Gallia'—Greek, the alphabet merely), put Duncan into the school, sure that he would teach the children well and conscientiously, and hopeful that he might ultimately be led to reform; for ministers are sanguine men, at least all who do any good among other men.

And the new schoolmaster had indeed done his bit, though with abundance of the rod and some detriment to his own temper and the cuticle of his pupils. But no such scholars went up from three counties as those who matriculated straight from the hedge school of the parish of Dullarg during the reign of the deposed minister of the Shaws. By and by Duncan picked up other little bits of patronage—the precentorship, as a matter of course, the inspectorship of poor, and ultimately the registrarship of births, deaths, and marriages. In the Dullarg it is a saying that we 'keep oor ain fish guts for oor ain sea maws.' This is not an expression common in the higher circles, but the thing itself is common enough there. Duncan married a village girl, who had made him a good wife during her short life, but had not been able to master the bottle imp. She had left him one daughter, our imperious beauty of the yellow locks.

But we have gone afield from our school. The whole building, a long narrow barn, built of rough ashlar work with many small windows, never all whole at once, was sleepily droning with the morning lessons. Flora Duncanson, within a yard of her father, was making paper arrows to throw at Andrew Tait, the son

of the wealthy farmer who had married Duncan Duncanson's old sweetheart. Andrew was a long-limbed lad, known as 'the fathom o' pump water.' He was shy and thoughtful, prone to moon in corners, a lad in whom could be perceived no tincture of the bucolic clumsiness of the one parent or the faded and selfish gentility of the other. He liked to be teased by Flora Duncanson, for it gave him an opportunity of looking at her hair. He had never heard of Rossetti, but he said in his heart, 'Her hair that lay along her back was yellow like ripe corn!'

The ex-minister sat at his high desk, and the hum of the school acted soothingly upon his unsteady nerves. A vision began to assert itself of something that he knew to be on one shelf of his private cupboard in the little dominie's house adjoining the school. Without a word he rose and stepped out. Before he could get round the school, Flora was out and after him. Thereupon the school resolved itself into a pandemonium, and Andrew the smith, shoeing his horses in the old 'smiddy' at the foot of the lane, said to his apprentice, 'The dominie'll be oot to wat his thrapple. Oor Wull will be keepin' the schule the noo!' 'Wull' was a good-natured clever elder boy who was supposed to take charge of the school in the absence of the dominie. This he did usually by stopping the promiscuous fighting and scuffling which went on all round the school and organising a stated and official combat in the middle of the floor between a pair of well-matched urchins. 'Let all things be done decently and in order' was Wull's motto.

In the height of the turmoil a great brown head presented itself at the door. It was the head of big red 'Trusty' the half-collie half-St. Bernard which sometimes accompanied Andrew Tait to the school, and played about outside till that youth got free of his bondage, when the pair went joyously homewards.

No sooner was he spied than fifty voices invited him to enter. He came in, nothing loath, and crouched beneath the desk which stood against the wall by the window where sat his master with some bosom cronies. There he was lying concealed by a rampart of legs and

slates when the master entered with an angry frown on his brow and his hat jammed over his forehead in a way that boded no good to the school. 'It's gaun to be a lickin' day,' said Andrew Tait, with an air of grim foreboding. All was quiet in a moment, for the fear of Duncan Duncanson with the black dog on his back was heavy on every young heart. Duncan was a good and a kindly man, and would go anywhere to help a neighbour in trouble, but he was undoubtedly savage in his cups. The imp of the black bag was in possession.

The boys trembled, but the great red dog lay quiet as pussy with his immense faithful head pillowed on his master's knees. The dominie went to his desk, and as nothing seemed to come of his ill-humour the school gradually returned to its condition of lazy inattention. Fred Graham, the boy next to Andrew Tait, whispered, 'Let me stroke the doggie's heid.'

'What'll ye gie's?' promptly replied Andrew, with the truly boyish commercial spirit.

'A peerie,' said his friend.

'An' the string?' added Andrew, who had a corner in does and could force the market. So for five minutes the big head was transferred to Fred Graham's knee, and the stroking performed to the satisfaction of all parties. Then the next chance had been for some time disposed of to young Sanny M'Quhirr of Drumquhat, who being a farmer's son never would have thought of stroking a dog save in school, for the laudable purpose of killing time and doing what was forbidden.

School currency was changing hands and finding its way into Andrew Tait's pockets at a great rate. The various claimants for next turn were so clamorous that they created some little disturbance, so that the master, seeing a cluster of heads together, noiselessly opened the lid of his desk and sent the 'taws' whirling down into their midst with hearty goodwill. They took Fred Graham round the neck, and he at once rose to receive his 'pawmies,' the price of his general amusements. He had not been the guilty person, but he hardly denied it even pro forma, so accustomed were they in that school to the Spartan code that the sin lay not in the action, but in the stupidity of being found out.

Through the gap formed by the absence of Fred on his melancholy errand, a gap like that made by the drawing of a tooth, the master saw the orange skin and solemn eyes of 'Trusty Tait,' boys' dog to the parish school of Nether Dullarg.

His wrath turned instantly on Trusty and his owner, and his resentment burned with a sullen exaggerated fury. He imagined that the animal had been brought into the school in order directly to insult him.

'Who brought that dog in here?' he asked.

'Please, sir, he juist cam',' said Andrew Tait.

'Put him out instantly!' he commanded.

'Please, sir, he'll no' gang.'

The dominie then went for the poker and approached the big dog, whose eyes began to shine with a yellow-light curiously different from that which had been in them when the boys were stroking his shaggy coat. But he lay motionless as though cut in stone, nothing living about him except those slumberous eyes with the red spark flaming at the bottom of them. His great tail lay along the floor of the thickness of a boy's arm, with which it was his wont to beat the boards as a thresher beats his sheaves at the approach of his master. Trusty Tait's dignity lay in his tail. His tenderest feelings had their abode there. By means of it he communicated his sentiments, belligerent or amicable. When his master appeared in the distance he wagged it ponderously, when a canine friend hove in sight it waved triumphantly, at the sight of a gipsy or a tramp it grew oratory with the expressiveness of its resentment. As the dominie approached with his weapon of warfare, Andrew Tait drew the iron shod of his clog, which he would have called his 'cakkar,' across Trusty's tail. The dog instantly half rose on his forepaws, showing a scam of teeth like a row of danger-signals, and gave vent to a thunderous subterranean growl, which so intimidated the master that he turned his anger on the victim who promised less resistance. He dragged Andrew Tait by the collar of his jacket into the middle of the floor, and, forgetting in his beclouded condition what he held in his hand, he struck him once

across the head with the heavy iron poker, stretching him senseless on the ground. The whole school rose to its feet with a dull, confused moan of horror, but before any one could move Trusty had the dominie by the throat, threw him backwards over a form, and stood guard, growling with short blood-curdling snorts over the prostrate body of his young master. Through the open door Flora Duncanson came flying, for the noise had told her even in the cottage that something unusual was happening.

'Go home at once!' she called to the children, and though there were many there older than she, without a murmur they filed outside—remaining, however, in whispering awestruck groups at the foot of the playground.

'Go home, father, this moment!' she said to her father, who had gathered himself together, and now stood shaking and uncertain like one awakened from a dream, groping stupidly with his hands. The old man turned and went heavily away at his daughter's word. He even thought of asking her for the key of the cupboard, the strife for the possession of which had been the beginning of his black humour; but a moment's thought convinced him of the hopelessness of the request. 'But I would be muckle the better o't!' he said, and sighed—perhaps for a moment conscious how much the worse he had been of it.

Flora Duncanson stood, over the senseless body of Andrew Tait. Trusty was licking the face. A thin streak of blood stole from under the hair and down the brow. The dog growled as the girl approached, but ultimately allowed her to come to the lad's side.

'Oh, Andra, Andra!' she said, the salt water running silently down her cheeks.

The boy slowly opened his eyes, looked at the dog once more and then fixedly at Flora Duncanson. He always liked to look at her hair, but he had never noticed till now how beautiful her eyes were. He could not think what it was they reminded him of—something he had seen in a dream, he thought.

'Dinna greet, Flora,' he said, 'I'll tell my faither that I fell, an' I'll lick ony boy in the schule that says I

didna! Oh, Flora, but yer e'en are terrible bonny!'

This is all a very old story in the Dullarg now, and Trusty is a Nestor among dogs. He spends all his fine afternoons on a broomy knowe by himself, for what with puppies and bairns the farm is not the quiet place that it used to be when he was young. Trusty overlooks a wide prospect were his faithful dim eyes able to see, but as it is he devotes himself chiefly to the flies which settle upon his nose. Over there on the slope glimmer in the haze the white stones in the churchyard. Trusty never was much of a scholar, in spite of so long frequenting the village academy, but had he been able to read he might have found this inscription on a granite tombstone down in the old kirkyard by the Dee water:—

HERE IS THE GRAVE OF DUNCAN
DUNCANSON, AGED 71 YEARS, SOMETIME

MINISTER OF THE PARISH OF SHAWS, FOR
THIRTY YEARS SCHOOLMASTER IN THIS PARISH,
ERECTED BY HIS AFFECTIONATE CHILDREN,
ANDREW AND FLORA TAIT.

'To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.'

9. WHY DAVID OLIPHANT REMAINED A PRESBYTERIAN

'Now, Mr. Oliphant, can you conceive any reason, except national prejudice, to which I am sure you are superior, why you should not be with us in the Church? It is, as you know, quite time that you made up your mind. It is, indeed, solely with the hope of assisting you to a decision that I have desired to see you now.'

An urbanely dignified clergyman is speaking to a young man in an Oxford Common Room.

'I am very sensible of your lordship's condescension,' replied David Oliphant, late scholar of St. Magnus, to the Right Reverend the Bishop of Alchester.

That learned and liberal prelate was to preach before the University on the following day, and in the meantime he was endeavouring to serve his Church by attracting to her bosom, that refuge at once so inclusive and so exclusive, another of those brilliant young Northmen who have given to St. Magnus its primacy among Oxford colleges, and from whose number the Anglican Church has obtained many of her finest scholars and her wisest prelates.

The Bishop's main question David Oliphant did not answer immediately, for many strange things were working within him. His certain desire was to do the work of the Christ. So much was clear to him—but how and where? The answer was not so definite. His college friends were entering the Church by troops. They were as earnest and hopeful as he—they looked forward to beginning their work at once. They seemed beckoning him to come along with them into their mother-church, at whose door stood the amiable and comfortable Bishop of Alchester, with hands outstretched in welcome. And then before David Oliphant there rose up the vision of his own rugged Cameronian kirk—like Nature, a stern but not unkindly foster-mother. He thought of the four slow years of strictest theological training which awaited him if he returned to the North—four years for the scholar of St. Magnus equally with

the rudest country lad who had stumbled through the requisite sessions in arts. Small wonder that he wavered, dividing the swift mind, or that the Bishop waited his decision with the smile of successful persuasion in his shrewd and kindly eyes.

'We need such men as you, Mr. Oliphant,' he said, 'with your parts and—ah—your other advantages you may go very far.'

They say that before the mind of the drowning, the past defiles in a panorama of inconceivable rapidity. David Oliphant had almost made up his mind to follow what seemed his manifest destiny, when certain visions of a time long past rose up before him, stood a moment clear, and then vanished, even before the grey eyes of his Grace of Alchester had lost their expectant smile. How swiftly they came and went it is hard to give an idea of. They take so long to tell, so unwillingly do words carry pictures.

These are the things which came to David Oliphant, in clear and solemn vision, during the five minutes ere he answered the Bishop of Alchester.

He saw an old grey-headed man, who worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff, in a sheltered nook behind a low whitewashed Galloway farmhouse. He held his broad bonnet in his hands and the wind blew a stray lock over a brow like a weather-beaten cliff. His lips moved, but there was no sound. A little lad of five came pattering up the foot-worn path which led to the private oratory of the family high priest. He had asked hurriedly of the general public of the kitchen, 'What gate did G'appa gae?' but without waiting for the superfluous answer he trotted along that well-known path that 'G'appa 'always' gaed.' The silent prayer ended, the pair took their way hand in hand to the heights of the crags, where, under its shallow covering of turf and heather, the grey teeth of the granite shone. As they sit they speak, each to the other, like men accustomed to high and serious discourse.

But why did the martyrs not go to the kirk the king wanted them to?' the child asked.

The old man rose, strong now on his feet, the fire in his eye, his natural force not abated. He pointed

north to where on Auchenreoch Muir the slender shaft of the martyrs' monument gleamed white among the darker heather—south to where on Kirkconnel hillside Grier of Lag found six living men and left six corpses—west toward Wigtown Bay, where the tide drowned two of the bravest of women, tied like dogs to a stake—cast to the kirkyards of Balweary and Nether Dullarg, where under the trees the martyrs of Scotland lie thick as gowans on the lea. The fire of the Lord was in his eye.

'Dinna forget, David Oliphant,' he said, his voice high and solemn, as in a chant, 'that these all died for Christ's cause and covenant. They were murdered because they worshipped God according to their conscience. Remember, boy, till the day of your death, that among these men were your forebears, and forget not also who they were that slew them!'

And after twenty years the late scholar of St. Magnus remembered.

Again the young man saw a wide black night filled with the echoes of thundering and the rushing of rain. The same child stood in the open doorway, and, weeping, called pitifully for 'Grandfather.' There was no answer, but the whole firmament lightened with white flame from east to west; and in that silent moment of infinite clearness he saw his grandfather's figure upright on the knoll before the house, the head thrown upwards towards that intense whiteness where the heavens seemed to open and the very face of God to look through.

Once more he saw a Sabbath morning, still with the primeval stillness of '*a land where no man comes or hath come since the making of the world.*' Peace all about the farm-steading, silence on all the fields, hardly a bleat from the lambs on the hill; within, a cool and calm crispness as of home-spun linen kept in lavender. It was the silence which in an old Cameronian household succeeded the 'taking of the Buik 'on the morning of the day of the Lord.

Suddenly at the outer door the old man appears, and he calls upstairs to his couple of manly sons—to him ever but lads to do his will—'Boys, bring the 'Queen's Airms' up to the march dyke this minute!' The men come downstairs, and, without any show of surprise, take down the old muskets off the wall, provide themselves with powder and shot, and follow their father along the wide stony sweep of the hill road. The little lad also follows, with a sense that the bottom has dropped out of his universe, when guns could be taken down on Sabbath morning.

In the brisk morning sun a scattered group of men and dogs was drawing slowly through the great gaps in the pine woods towards the gate which was the entrance of the small rock-bound farm. At this gate the old man stands, his stalwart sons behind him, his broad blue bonnet in his hand. The hunters come coursing over the green. But ere any one can open the gate the old man steps forward, his white head bare to the sun. David Oliphant can see the white hairs glisten even now.

'My lord,' he says, 'forty year I have been on your land and your father's land. It does not become me to tell you that you are breaking the law of God by hunting the beasts of the field on His day; but, my lord, one thing you cannot do—you cannot break it on this land as long as I am upon it.'

The great laird came forward, young and passionate, a Rehoboam of many foolish counsellors.

'What's that he says, Daly? That we can't hunt on his farm! I'll teach the canting old hypocrite that every yard belongs to me. Open the gate, Daly!'

'My lord,' said the old man, 'I am not careful to answer you concerning this matter, but I beseech you for your father's memory not to do this thing.'

The young man wavered; but a murmur arose from his companions.

'Don't let them spoil the sport with their canting and their blunderbusses. Stand out of the way, Oliphant! Down with the gates, Daly!'

But Daly was not destined to take the gates down, for once again the voice of the Cameronian elder rang

out, steady and respectful as ever.

'My lord, it is not my will to shed human blood, or to resist you by force, though I might well do it, but I solemnly warn you I will shoot every dog of yours that sets foot on my land this day. Boys, are you ready? Stan' forrit!'

The visions melted from before David Oliphant, and he saw only the patient Bishop waiting his answer, yawning a little because his dinner was deferred. But there was no uncertainty in the young man's answer.

'My lord,' said he, with the steady voice and eye that had come to him from his grandfather, 'I thank you heartily for your good and kindly thought for me. Indeed, I am in no way deserving of your interest; but, such as I am, I must cleave to my own church and my own people!'

10. THE THREE MAISTER PETER SLEES, MINISTERS IN THE PARISH OF COUTHY

It was a still summer evening in the slack between hay and harvest on the farm of Drumquhat. The Galloway moors rose in long purple ridges to the west. The sun had set, and in the hollows pools of mist were gathering, islanded with clumps of willow. The 'maister' had made his nightly rounds, and was now meditatively taking his smoke, leaning on the gate at the head of the loaning, and looking over a green cornfield, through the raw colour of which the first yellow was beginning to glimmer. From the village half a mile away he could hear the clink of the smith's anvil. There came into his mind a slow thought of the good crack going on there, and he erected himself as far as a habitual stoop would allow him, as if he proposed 'daunerin' over to the village to make one of the company in the heartsome 'smiddy.'

For a moment he stood undecided, and then deliberately resumed his former position with his elbows on the 'yett.' Saunders MaWhurr had remembered his wife. To do him justice, it was seldom that he forgot her. But in his single perpendicular moment Saunders had been able to see over the stone dyke which hid from him the broken and deceptive path which led from the farm along the burnside and over the meadows to the village of Whunnyliggat. What he saw would have astonished a stranger, but it did not even induce Saunders to take a second look. A man was approaching up the loaning, apparently on all-fours. The farmer knew instinctively that the stranger was no stranger to him. He only saw William Kie, gravedigger and minister's man, walking as he had walked any time these forty years. (William's name was strictly, no doubt, MacKie but the Mac was as hopelessly lost as the Books of Manetho.) He even remembered William when he was a dashing young hedger and ditcher with a red plush waistcoat for the lasses to look at on Sabbaths as they walked modestly from the churchyard gate to the door of Couthy Kirk.

That was before William got his hurt by being

thrown off a hearse in the famous south country snowstorm of the 1st of May. William Kie had never married. Why, you shall hear some day if you care, for once in a mellow mood William told me the story in his whitewashed bachelor's house, that stood with its gable end to the street, opposite the Free Kirk School. The bairns vexed his soul by playing 'Antony Over' against the end of his house, and running into his garden for the ball when, at every third throw, it went among the beadle's kale. Had they been the pupils of the authorised parochial dominie at the other end of the village, William might have borne it with some degree of equal mind; but, as he said, a beadle for forty years in the Parish Kirk is bound to have his feelings about the Free Kirk.

The farmer of Drumquhat did not turn round in reply to the greeting of the minister's man. He, too, had his feelings, for he was a 'Free' and an elder.

He said, 'Thank ye, Weelum, I canna compleen. Hoo's yersel?'

'No' that weel, Drumquhat; things are awfu' drug. I haena buried but yin since Martinmas—no' a sowl for fower months, and the last but a tramp body that drooned himsel' in the Dee—a three-fit grave that I made ower narrow an' had to widen in the sweat o' my broo—never a bawbee extra for't frae the parish, but a grummle from that thrawn stick o' a registrar!'

Man alive!' said Saunders MaWhurr, indifferently, his thoughts being arithmetically with his calves as he watched Jo, his farm boy, turn them out into the field. The gravedigger knew that the farmer's attention was perfunctory, but he was not offended, for Saunders kept three pair of horse and a gig. Instinctively, however, he took up a subject that was bound to interest a Free Kirk elder.

He said, 'Did ye hear what we got at the Hie Kirk yesterday? I daresay no'. Yer plooman was there, I ken, to see Jess Coupland; but him—he disna ken a sermon frae an exposeetion, let alane bringing awa' the fine points o' sic a discoorse as we gat yesterday.'

'He was out a' nicht, an' I havna seen him since he allowsd,' said Saunders, in his non-committal

manner. 'But what did ye get to mak' ye craw sae croose? No' a new sermon, I'se warrant!'

'Weel, na, he didna exactly gang that length; but, dod, it was better than that—it was a new yin o his granfaithers! Whaur he had fa'en on wi't is mair than I can say, but the manse lass tells me that he was howkin' up in the garret twa efternoons last week, an' a bonny sicht he made o' himsel'!

In a moment the farmer of Drumquhat was quite a different man; he even offered William Kie a share of the gate to lean upon by silently stepping aside, which was a great deal for a man in his position. William acknowledged his kindness by silently seating himself on a broken gate-post lying at the dykeback. This was what is known in learned circles as a compromise.

The beadle took up his parable: 'As sune as he steppit oot o' the manse, I could see that there was something onusual in the wund. First, I thoct that it micht be clean bands that the mistress had gotten for him; for Mistress Slee was in gey guid fettle last week, an' I didna ken what she michtna hae dune; but when I saw him tak' oot o' his case the same auld pair that he has worn since the Sacrament afore last—ye can juist tell them frae the colour o' the goon—I kenned that it bood be something else that was makkin' him sae brisk. Man, Saunders,' said William, forgetting to say 'Drumquhat,' as he had intended, which was counted more polite from a man like him, 'Man, Saunders, I dinna ken whaur my een could hae been, for I even gat a glisk o' the sermon as it gaed intil the Buik, yet never for a minute did I jaloose what was comin.'

'Ay, man, Weelum, an' what was't ava?' said Saunders, now thoroughly awake to a congenial topic. He was glad that he had not gone down to the 'smiddy' now, for Saunders was not in the habit of opening out there before so many.

'Weel, Saunders, as I am tellin' you, it was a new sermon o' his granfaither's, daecent man, him that lies aneath the big thruch stane in the wast corner o' the kirkyard. It's maistly covered wi' dockens an' soorocks noo, for the Maister Slee that we hae the noo is mair fameeliar wi' his forebears' han' o' write than wi' the bit

stanies that haud them daccently doon till Gawbriel's trump bids them rise!

'Haun' o' write!' quoth Saunders; 'what can the craitur mean?'

'Saunders MaWhurr,' said the minister's man, solemnly, 'therty year an' mair hae I carried the Buik, an' howkit the yaird, an' dibbled the cabbage for the Maister Sles, faither an' son. Ay, an' I mind brawly o' the granfaither—a graun' figure o' a man him, sax fit twa in his buckled shoon. Saunders, I'm no' an upsettin' man, an' quate-spoken even on Setterday nicht, but ye wull aloo that I'm bun' to ken something about the three Peter Sles, ministers o' the parish o' Couthy.'

'Gae on,' said Saunders.

'Weel, it's no' onkenned to you that the twa first Maister Sles wraite their sermons, for they were self-respectin' men, an' nae ranter haiverin' oot o' their heids! Na '

'What about the granfaither, Weelum?' put in Saunders, quickly, avoiding, in the interests of the history, contentious matter upon which at another time he would gladly have accepted gage of battle.

'Weel, the granfaither was, as I hae said, a graun', solit man, wi' a reed face on him like the mune in hairst, an' sic a bonny heid o' hair it was hardly considered daecent in the parish o' Couthy. Fowk used to think he wore a wig till they saw him on horseback, for he wad ride wi' his hat in his haun' an' his hair blawin' oot in the wund like Absalom's. He was a rale fine moral preacher, reared in the hinder end o' the last century, but neyther to haud nor to bind if onybody ca'ed him a Moderate. In deed an' truth, onybody that saw him wi' the laird when the twasome had been haein' denner thegither could see that was a lee an' a big yin!'

'Juist that,' said the farmer of Drumquhat.

'But when he preached on the Sabbath he gied the fowk no gospel to ca' gospel, but he did mak' them scunner with the Law; an' when he preached on Justice, Temperance, an' Judgment to come there wasna a shut e'e in a' Couthy Kirk! Fine I mind o' it,

though I was but a callant, an' hoo I wussed that he wad hae dune an' let me hame to mak' pyoives o' pooter for the fair on Monday.

'The faither o' oor present Maister Slee ye'll mind yersel'. He was a strong Non-Intrusion man afore the 'forty-three,' as strong as it was in the craitur to be. A' fowk thocht that he wad hae comed oot wi' the lave, an' sae I believe he wad but for the wife, wha lockit him in the garret for three days, an' gied him his meals through the sky-licht!

'His sermons were like himsel', like pease brose, made o' half a pun o' peas to the boilerfu' o' water—rale evangelical, ye ken, but meat for babes, hardly for grown fowk. I needna tell ye, eyther, aboot young Maister Slee; weel, he's no' young noo ony mair than oorsel's.'

'Humph!' said Saunders.

'He preaches aboot the lilies o' the field, hoo bonny they are, an' aboot the birds o' the air, an' the mowdies in the yird—the very craws he canna let alane. He said the ithar Sabbath day that fowk that wraite guid resolutions in their note-buiks to keep out the de'il war like the farmer that shut the yetts o' his cornfields to keep oot the craws!'

'That's nane sae stupid!' said Saunders.

'Na; he's a graun' naiteralist, the body,' said the minister's man, 'an' whan the big Enbra' societies come doon here to glower an' wunner at the bit whurls an' holes in the rocks, he's the verra man to tak' them to the bit; an' whan the Crechton Asylum fowk cam' doon to a picnic, as they ca'ed it, it was Maister Slee that gied them a lectur' on the bonny heuchs o' Couthy. An' faith, I couldna tell ye what yin o' the twa companies was the mair sensible.

'Weel, to mak' a lang story short, if I get a fair guid look at the paper when he pits it intil the Buik, I can tell by the yellaness o't whether it's his ain, or his faither's, or his granfaither's; but I maistly forget to look, for he generally gies us them day aboot, beginnin' on the sacrament wi' his faither's famous discoorse, 'As a nail in a sure place,' that we had every sax months, till the Glencairn joiner, a terrible outspoken body, telt

him that that nail wadna haud in that hole ony langer!'

'But when he begins to preach, we sune ken wha's barrel he has been in, for if we hear o' oor duty to the laird, an' the State, an' them in authority ower us, we say, *'If the wast winda was open, an' the auld man wad cock his lug, he wad hear something that he wad ken.'* On the ither haun', if we hear aboot these present sad troubles, an' speeritual independence, an' Effectual Calling, we ken he's been howkin' in the big beef-barrel whaur the Pre-Disruption sermons o' his daddy lie in pickle.

'Sae yesterday he gied us a terrible startle wi' a new yin' o' his granfaither's that nae man leevin' had ever heard.'

'An' what was his text?' said practical Saunders.

"Deed, an' I'm no' sae guid at mindin' texts as I yince was; but the drift o' it was that we war to be thankfu' for the recent maist remarkable preservation o' oor land in the great victory that the Duke o' Wellington an' oor noble army had won ower the usurper Bonyparty on the plains o' Waterloo!'

'That maun hae been a treat!' said Saunders.

11. THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAN FAIRLEY OF EARLSWOOD

His is no carried tale, but just as the minister himself told it to me. He was pleased like when he telled me, an' I am giving you what is not to be told to everybody. Not that Allan Fairley need be ashamed, but proud the rather if every soul from here to Maidenkirke had the outs and the ins of the story at their fingers' end. But I'm telling you that you may know the right way of the story, for there's as many ways of it as bees in a dyke.

The way I came to hear it was this. Allan and the wife were at Drumquhat overnight on their marriage jaunt, him being sib to my mistress, and prood of the connection as he has a right to be. My wife was a wee feared about having her in the house, being aware that she was a Gordon of Earlswood—the auldest stock in Galloway, and brought up to be a lady-body. But she need have had no fears, for ye never saw gentle or semple mair free or heartsome. She ran to the barn to help to gather the eggs, and got five, three being nest-eggs and a cheena one that was put there to deceive the chuckies. She kilted her coats and helped to feed the calves. Then she was for learning to milk, but Black Bet laid back her lugs, and in the hinderend kicked ower the luggie; and there was never such laughing in Drumquhat since it was a farm-town. She made hersel' as merry and heartsome as though there had never been a Gordon in Earlswood or a Douglas in the Isle. And Allan watched her as if he could not let her out of his sight—smiling like a man that dreams a pleasant dream but fears he will awaken. Then when her dancing een came across his steady, quiet look, she would come behind him and put her hands over his eyes, asking what she had done that he should look at her like that.

'You haven't found out my last murder yet, Allan!' she would say, and Allan would shift in his chair well pleased to watch her. It was gurlly weather when they were at Drumquhat—

'The wind made wave the red weed on the dyke, An' gurl' weather gruit beastes' hair,' quoted Allan, who

has store of ballads, beyond what most ministers think it their duty to carry. When the wife was off with the candles and her hostess mysteries (mostly kindly fuss and a chance to gossip) to see Allan's young guidwife to her chamber, Allan and me sat a gye while glowering at the red of the peat, till I broke the silence that had fallen between us—the silence of companionship, with the question that rose quite natural, for it was not yesterday or the day before that I first kenned the lad. 'Ay, Allan, lad, an' where did ye fa' on wi' her?' I could see the pride, good honest pride, rising in Allan's face, flushing his cheek, and setting his eye fairly in a lowe, as he answered, 'Ay, Saunders, didna I do the best day's work ever I did when I got her?' This was my own thought for the lad, but I only said, 'An' hoo did ye fa' on wi' her?'

'It's a long story, Saunders, but I'll tell you'—here he glanced at the clock, him that used to sit till the cocks were crawin' a merry midnight— 'I'll tell ye briefly,' says he. The wives are not long in making us 'like the horse or mule, whose mouth, lest they come near to him, A bridle must command.'

I quoted this once to my wife, who replied, 'Humph, an' I never heard ye war the waur o't— 'horse or mule' quo she, 'fegs, it's anither quaderaped I was referrin' to!' But at this point I had business in the stable.

'To begin at the beginning,' said Allan. 'When I was elected to the parish of Earlswood I was the people's candidate, ye maun ken. I had four hundred votes to thirty-three; but Walter Douglas Gordon of Earlswood, sole heritor of the parish, was against me. He proposed a far-out friend of his own, never dreaming but he would be elected without a word, and ye may guess what a back-set he got when only his foresters and them that was most behadden to him voted for his man.'

'He wad neyther be to haud nor bin', 'said I.

'Na,' said Allan, 'and in open kirk meeting he cuist up to them that was proposin' me that my faither was but a plooman, and my mither knitted his hose. But he forgot that the days of patronage were by, for the Cross

Roads joiner rises, and says he, 'I ken Allan Fairley, and I ken his faither an' mither, an' they hae colleged their son as honestly on plooin' an' stockin'-knittin' as your son on a' the rents o' Earlswood!'

'He'll never be minister o' the parish of Earlswood wi' my guidwull!' says he.

'He'll e'en be minister o' Earlswood withoot it, then,' said the joiner—an honest man, not troubled with respect of persons. 'There's nae richt o' pit an' gallows noo, laird!' says he.

'An' it's as well for you and your like!' said the Laird of Earlswood, as he strode out of the kirk, grim as Archie Ball-the-Cat.

'Weel, Saunders, I considered that four hundred was a good enough off-set against thirty-five of Earlswood's foresters and cot-men, so I was settled in the parish, and took my mither from her knitting to keep the manse.'

Honour thy father and thy mother!' said I, 'you did well, Allan.

'The folk at the big house left the kirk and drove over to the Episcopalians at Ford, but I went to call, as it was my duty to do. And I met a young lady in the grounds and asked her the way.'

'I ken they are extensive,' says I; 'it was as weel to mak' sure of your road!

'Yes,' said Allan, ignoring a slight significance of tone, 'I asked the way, and the young lady kindly walked with me to the door. This was the message that the footman brought back, the young lady standing by, 'Mr. Gordon declines to see you, and if you come on the policies again he will have you prosecuted for trespass.'

'Of course he couldna uphaud that,' I put in.

'Very likely no,' said Allan, 'but it was sore to bide from a poo'dered fitman on Earlswood doorstep under the blue een o' Grace Gordon!'

'An' what did she say?' I asked, curious for once.

'Say!' said Allan, proudly; 'this is what she did: 'Permit me to offer you an apology, Mr. Fairley,' she said, 'and to show you the private path through the fir plantation which you may not know.' Oh, I know it was maybe no' ladylike, Saunders '

'But it was awfu' woman-like!' said I.

'I'll no' say anything about the walk through the plantation,' said Allan Fairley, who no doubt had his own sacred spots like other folk, 'but I have no need to deny that a new thing came into my life that day when the rain-drops sparkled on the fir needles. I mind the damp smell o' them to this day.' (And there is no doubt that the boy would to his dying day. I mind mysel' but there is no need going into that).

'The time gaed on as it has the gait of doing,' Allan continued, 'and things settled a wee, and I thocht that they would maybe all come round—except Earlswood, of course. Ye maun ken that there's a big colony o' dreadfu' respectable gentry in oor parish—retired tradesfolk frae Glasgow and Edinburgh, with a pickle siller and a back-load o' pride.'

'I ken the clan!' says I.

'Weel, Saunders, ye'll hardly believe what I'm gaun to tell you, but it's no made story I'm telling you. There was twa o' them cam' to the manse yae nicht,' said Allan, lapsing into his Doric, 'and the lass showed them intil the study. It was gye an' dark, but they wadna hear o' lichtin' the lamp, an' I didna wunner or a' was dune. They didna seem to have come aboot onything in partiklar, but they couldna get awa', so they sat and sat an' just mishandled the rims o' their hats. They lookit at yin anither an' oot at the wunda an' up at the ceilin', but they never lookit at me. At last yin o' them, a writer body, said in a kin' o' desperation, 'Mr. Fairley, we have been deputed to tell you what the better classes of the parish think would be the best for you to do.'

'I am muckle obliged for the interest of the better classes of the parish in my affairs,' says I but he gaed on like a bairn that has his lesson perfect.

'They think that it is a very noble thing of you to provide for your mother—filial piety and so on'—here he was at a loss, so he waved his hands— 'but you must be aware that—that I have a difficulty in expressing my meaning—that the ladies of the congregation, however willing, are as unable to call upon Mistress Fairley, as it would no doubt be embarrassing for her to receive

them. Would it not be better that some other arrangement—some smaller cottage could surely be taken.'

'He got no further; he wadna hae gotten as far if for a moment I had jaloosed his drift. I got on my feet. I could hardly keep my hands off them, minister as I was but I said, 'Gentlemen, you are aware of what you ask me to do. You ask me to turn out of my house the mither that bore me, the mither that learned me 'The Lord's my Shepherd,' the mither that wore her fingers near the bane that I might gang to the college, that solded her bit plenishin' that my manse might be furnished! Ye ask me to show her to the door—I'LL SHOW YOU TO THE DOOR!' an' to the door they gaed!'

'Weel dune! That was my ain Allan!' cried I.

'The story was ower a' the parish the next day, as ye may guess, an' wha but Miss Gordon o' Earlswood ca'ed on my mither the day efter that—an' kissed her on the doorstep as she gaed away. The lawyer's wife saw her.

'There was a great gathering o' the clans at Earlswood when it a' cam' oot, but Grace had the blood of Archibald the Grim as weel as her faither; an' she stood by the black armour of the Earlswood who died at Flodden by the king, and said she afore them a': 'I have heard what you say of Mr. Fairley, now you shall all hear what I say. I say that I love Allan Fairley with all my heart, and if one of you says another word against him, I shall walk down to Earlswood manse and ask Allan Fairley if he will marry Grace Gordon as she stands!'

'Saunders,' said my wife, entering as if she had not been having an hour long woman's gossip with Grace Fairley, 'Saunders, there'll be nae word o' this when the clock strikes five the morrow's morn. I wunner at you, Allan Fairley, a mairriet man, keepin' him oot o' his bed till this time o' nicht wi' yer clavers!'

The meeting here broke up in confusion.

12. THE REV. JOHN SMITH OF ARKLAND PREPARES HIS SERMON

It is Friday, and the minister of Arkland was writing his sermon. Things had not gone well in Arkland that week. The meeting of the church court charged with the temporalities had not passed off well on Tuesday. One man especially had hurt the minister in a sensitive place. This was Peter M'Robert, the shoemaker. The minister had represented that a bath in a manse was not a luxury but a necessity, when Peter M'Robert said that as for him he had never had sic a thing in his life, an' as for the minister that auld Maister Drouthy had dune without yin in the manse for thirty-three year to the satisfaction o' the pairish.'

Then there had been certain differences of opinion within the manse itself, and altogether the sermon had been begun with the intention of dressing down the offending parishioners. Nearly all sermons are personal to the preacher. They have been awakened within him by some circumstance which has come to his knowledge during the week. Preachers use this fact for good or evil according to their kind.

A plain man was John Smith of Arkland—as plain and hoddan grey as his name. He had succeeded to the church with the largest majority that had been known in the presbytery, for in that neighbourhood to have given a man a unanimous call would have been considered a disgrace and a reflection on the critical discrimination of the congregation. He had tried to do his duty without fear or favour, only asking that his hands should not be tied. He visited the sick with a plain quiet helpfulness which brought sympathy with it as surely as the minister entered the house. His sermons were not brilliant, but they were staves and crutches to many.

Now as he sat at his manse window that bitter November morning he watched the rain volleying on the round causeway stones and the wide spaces of the village street dimly white with the dancig spray. The minister felt grimly in unison with the elements as he sat framing his opening sentences. He had chosen his

text from a wonderful chapter. 'Wisdom is justified of her children.' And in this wise he began to write, 'To be ignorant is to be dangerous. The ignorant man, though he be but one, can make of no account the wisdom of many men. After the wise of many generations have been striving to teach a people wisdom, a knave or a fool may come and cry aloud, *'There is no god but ourselves, there is no law but our own desires, there is no hereafter but the grave which we share with our sister the worm and our brother the dead dog!'* Yet so great is the folly of man that such a one may draw away much people after him into the wilderness of sin and self-indulgence. It is in accordance with the nature of man that ignorance and narrowness should often succeed where wisdom is wholly rejected.'

'That will do,' said the minister, looking over his work. He had Peter M'Robert in his mind, and he rose and walked his study, 'mandating' his opening sentences with appropriate gestures, much to the astonishment of Marget Lowrie in the kitchen, who said, 'Save us! what's wrang wi' the minister? This is no' Setturday!'

As he came in his sentry walks to the window which looked up the rain-swept street, he saw a dark-coloured oblong patch with a strange protuberance on the right side, hirpling like a decrepit beetle athwart the road, till, being caught at the manse corner by a bitter swirl, this irregular shape— 'If shape it could be called, that shape had none,' - stumbled and fell within thirty yards of the study window, discharging on the muddy road an avalanche of shavings, small branches, knobs, angles, and squares of wood. In a moment the minister was out at the door and was helping old Nance Kissock to her feet, and then under the eyes of all the wives in the village assisting her to collect again her bagful of chips and kindlings which the good-natured joiner allowed her to take once a week from his floor.

'I hope you are none the worse, Nance?' said the minister.

'I thank ye, Maister Smith; I'm sair forfoughten wi' the wun', but gin the Almichty be willing I'll be at the kirk on Sabbath to hear ye. It's guid to think on a' the

week what ye tell us. Whiles it gars me forget the verra rheumatics!'

When the minister got back into the friendly shelter of his study he took up the sheet which he had laid down in order to rush out to Nance Kisson's assistance. He read it over, but when he took his pen again, he did not seem to like it so well. If Nance were speaking the truth, and she fed during the week on the spiritual food which she received in his kirk on the Sabbath, he could not conceal from himself that next week she had a good chance of going hungry. Yet he could not allow Peter M'Robert to get off without a word, so he put the thought away from him and went on with his task. 'How often does a man of limited view mistake his own limitations for the possibilities of others. He never judges himself—he could not if he would—and naturally when he judges others it is only to condemn them.' A gust more than ordinarily powerful took the minister again to the window, and he saw John Scott, the herd from the Dornel, wringing the wet from his plaid. He knew that he had come down to the village from the hills three miles out of his road to get his wife's medicine. Presently he would trudge away manfully back again to the cot-house on the edge of the heather. Now the minister knew that come storm or calm John Scott would be at the kirk on the next day but one, and that he would carry away in the cool quiet brain that lay behind the broad brow the heads and particulars of the sermon he heard. As he went steadily knitting his stocking, conquering the heather with strides long and high, visiting his black-faced flock, he would go revolving the message that his minister had given him in the house of God.

'Wisdom is justified of her children,' repeated the minister, doggedly; but his text now awakened no fervour. There was no enthusiasm in it. He thought that he would go out and let the November winds drive the rain into his face for a tonic. So he slipped on his Inverness and let himself out. His feet carried him towards the garret of one of his best friends, where an aged woman, blind and infirm, was spending the latter end of her days. She could not now come to church,

therefore the minister went often to her—for it was sunshine to him also to bring light into that very dark place where the aged servant of God waited her end.

Mary Carment knew his step far down the stair, and she said to herself: 'It is himsel!' and deep within her she gave thanks. 'It is a great thing to hae the bread o' life broken to us so simply that we a' understan' it, Maister Smith,' she said.

'But, Mary, how long is it since you heard a sermon of mine?'

'It's true it's a lang time since I heard ye preach, minister, but I hear o' yer sermons every Sabbath. Yin and anither tells me pairt o't till I get as muckle as I can think on.'

As the minister said good-bye to Mary Carment, she said, 'Ye'll hae ower muckle to think on to mind me on the Lord's day when ye're speakin' for yer Maister; but I hae nane but you to mind, sir, so I'll be prayin' for you a' the time that ye're uphauadin' His name.'

'Thank you, Mary, I'll not forget!' said her minister.

And he went out much strengthened.

As he went mansewards he passed the little cobbler's den where Peter M'Robert was tap-tapping all the day, and the sound of Peter's terrible cough called to him with a voice that claimed him. He stepped in, and after the word of salutation, he asked his office-bearer:

'Are you not thinking of getting that cough attended to, Peter?' he said.

'Wha—me ? Na, no' me; hoots, it's but a bit host, nocht to speak aboot, thank ye for speerin', Maister Smith.'

Just then the minister saw the doctor walking rapidly up the far side of the street, calm-faced and dignified, as if this howling November north-easter were a beautiful June morning. Him he summoned.

'Here's Peter'll no' speak to you about his cough. He must have some of your drugs, doctor.'

The doctor called the unwilling cobbler from his last, and after a brief examination he said:

'No, I don't think there will be any need for drugs,

Mr. Smith; if you, Peter, will use a gargle to get rid of a trifling local inflammation. Less lapstone dust and less snuff, Peter, and warm water three times a day,' said the doctor, succinctly, and proceeded on his rounds.

As the minister went out, Peter looked up with a queer twinkle in his eye.

'Maister Smith,' he said, 'gin water be sae needful for the inside o' a cobbler's thrapple, maybe I was wrang in thinkin' that it wasna as necessary for the ootside o' a minister!'

'Then we'll say no more about it, Peter,' said the minister, smiling, as he closed the door. 'Mind your gargle!'

When the minister got to his study, he never stopped even to wipe his feet, and when the mistress followed to remonstrate, she found him putting his sermon in the fire.

The minister's text on the following Sabbath morning was an old one, but it was no old sermon that the Arkland folk got that day. The text was, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

Nance Kissock was there, and did not go home hungry, John Scott had come down from the muirs, and had something better than physic to take back to his ailing wife; Peter M'Robert sat in his corner looking cleaner than he had done within the memory of man—also he never coughed once; no less than eight different folk came in to tell blind Mary Carment about the sermon.

But none but the minister knew who it was that had been praying for him.

13. A DAY IN THE LIFE OF REV. JAMES PITBYE, MINISTER OF NETHER DULLARG

There is no doubt that we in this part of the world have the wale of ministers. And this is what nobody but John Tamson of the Risk thinks of denying; but then John was never a weel-spoken body, and indeed had some bit thought of trouble with the session in his young days long before he was an elder himsel'. So nobody heeds much what he says.

John was over at Drumquhat the other night, and after him and me had settled our matters, he was telling me about the minister that they had got now in the parish of Nether Dullarg.

'Ay,' says he, 'he's a rale quaitie chiel, oor minister —faut? Na, I hae no faut to find wi' him. Na, he's rale ceevil.'

'I'm glad ye like your minister, for there's no' that mony pleases you, John!' said I, to give him an opening, for I had heard that he was waur ta'en with this minister than with all the rest.

'You'll see a heap of him, having him, so to speak, just over the dyke?' said my mistress.

'Ow ay, he's no' that ill to see,' he said, very slow-like, for I could see that he was fair girnin' with what the clerk of our School Board calls '*an ironical mainner o' speech*.' This is a thing no' much affected in our countryside, except by John Tamson himsel' and a road-man they call 'Snash' Magill. Snash, when the School Board had him up before them for not sending his bairns to the new school at Dyke End, had the assurance to ask the chairman if his father would ever have been out of gaol if there had been a School Board in his young days. But the Board was very sore on him for this, because they mostly all were much obligated to the chairman or were nearly related to them that were.

John Tamson is no' a man that I would be fond of having for next neighbour myself, but he's very entertaining when he comes over for a forenicht. He likes to sit in the kitchen, so when he is at Drumquhat the men are very exact about 'lowsin'-time,' and I take a bit turn round the yard myself, just to see that they

dinna skimp the stabling of the horses in their hurry to get in to their supper, being well aware that John will be in full blast, and anxious to miss as little as possible.

'We fand faut wi' oor last twa ministers for no' stoppin' lang wi' us,' said John, when we were all quiet, for John cannot do with folk 'hotchin' an' fidgin'. If he had been a minister, as at one time he thought of being before his trouble, he would have taken a drink and unfolded his white napkin when the late folk are coming up the aisle, as our Mr. Fairley does whiles to encourage them to be in time next Sabbath. 'Ay, fowk were no' pleased wi' them for shiftin' so quick, but that's no' a faut that they'll hae to fin' wi' Maister Pitbye, or I'm sair mista'en, for I'm thinkin' that the Dullarg folk'll get him to bury!'

Here my wife put in her word as she stood at the bake-board—the wife whiles allows that she is scandalised with John's wild talk, but she finds a great deal of work in the kitchen when he is here for all that. She *'likes to hear the body's din,'* as she once said when I tried her with a chapter or two of Tammias Carlyle when I was reading in the winter forenichts about the Heroes.

'It's better than sittin' clockin' an' readin' — a body nicht as weel no' hae a man ava. Though I cannot mak' oot what the craitur wad be at, I like to hear the body's din!' My wife's a good wife, but her tongue wad clip cloots, or, as the clerk o' the School Board would say, she has 'a facility in expressing her meaning.'

'I hear that he's a very quaitie man,' said Mistress M'Whirr, 'but somebody was tellin' me that he was no' considered a great veesitor.'

'Veesitor, quo' she!' says John, with his birses up in a moment, 'hoo div ye think that the man has time to veesit, considerin' the wark that he pits through han' in a day! I wonder to hear ye, Mistress MaWhurr!'

The herd-boy got up off the settle, for it was interesting to hear John Tamson uphaudin' the ministers—him bein' weel kenned for an Auld Kirk elder and nae great professor.

'If I dinna ken what that man does in the day,

there's naeboddy kens,' said John, raxing for a peat to light his pipe. 'Noo, I'll juist gie ye an idea—last Friday I was aboot the hoose a' day, aff an' on, wi' a meer that was near the foalin'.

'At nine by the clock his bedroom blind gaed up, an' he cam' doon the stair maybe a quarter o' an 'oor after or thereby. The mistress had been up an' aboot frae seven, an' had the bairns a' washt an' dresst, an' oot at the back so as no' to wakken their faither, or disturb him in his thinkin'. Weel, doon he comes an' gets his breakfast, for I saw Betty takkin' in the cream frae the larder at the end o' the hoose. She skimmed it aff the bairns' milk for their parritch, an' set it there for the minister himsel', it being weel kenned through a' Gallawa' that cream is needed for the brain wark. Then there's a bell rings for prayers, an' Betty synes hersel' an' gangs ben, an' their mither shoos the bairns out o' the sand-hole, an' gies them a dicht to mak' them faceable to gang in. Then in ten minutes they're a' oot again, an' here comes himsel' for a rest an' a smoke, and to look oot for the post. Maybes in half an 'oor the post comes in sicht, wi' his troosers buckled up, for he's an onmarried man an' thinks a dale o' his reed braid. The minister has never moved, smokin' an' thinkin', nae doot, o' the Sabbath's sermon. The post gies him twa-three papers an' letters, an' then yesterday's Scotsman that he tak's alang wi' Maister MacPhun doon at the Cross Roads. The post's auntie cleans Maister MacPhun's kirk, so the post tak's the paper up to the Dullarg for naething. 'They're juist from the Church Offices, take them on to the Manse, an' gie me the paper,' he says. Syne he sits doon, decent man, as he had a good richt to do, on the green seat at the end o' the hoose, an' wi' great an' surprisin' diligence he reads the Scotsman till maybe half-past twal. But he has had cracks forbye in the byegaun, wi' a farmer that had been at the smiddy, wi' John Grier the tea-man, wha is an elder o' his an' never contres him in the session, an' forbye has sent twa tramps doon the road wi' a flea i' their lug, I'm thinkin'. Then he lays the paper doon on's knee an' ye wad think that his studies war' makkin' him sleepy; but little do ye ken him if ye think sae— for

roon the hoose efter a yella butterflee comes his boy Jeems, wha disna promise to be the quait eevil man his father is. He stops the callant aboot the quickest, an' sen's him in to his mither to bring oot word when the denner will be ready. Maister Pitbye says nocht when the answer comes, but he tak's up Thursday's paper again, an' has a look at the adverteesements an' the births, daiths, an' mairriages. Then he cleans his pipe, for he's a carefu' man, an' in some things baith eident and forehanded.

'Then efter denner is by he has another smoke, as every man should that has a respec' for his inside. Then he fills again an' gangs inbye to his study, where the blind is drawn doon, for ower muckle licht is no guid for the sermon-makkin'. For twa 'oors he works hard there, an' disna like to be disturbit nayther, for yince afore we fell oot, when I gaed to see him about some sma' maitter, the lass pit me in raither sharp, an' the sofa gied an awfu' girg, an' there sat the minister on's ain study chair, blinkin' an' no weel pleased, juist like a hoolet, at bein' disturbit at the studyin'.

'There's nae mainner o' doot that it's then that the sermons are made, for a' the rest o's time I can accoont for. Then when tea is bye, oot comes the minister wi' his pipe, an' sets his elbaws on the dyke, an' does some mair o' the thinkin'. Then he pits on his third best hat an' awa' he sets doon the brae to the shop, an' there, as oor lass Peg telled me, him an' John Aitken ca'ed the crack for the best pairt o' an 'oor. Then he gangs his wa's in, as he does every nicht, to see the Clerk o' oor Schule Board, wha ance at an election time made a temperance speech in the next coonty, but wha's ower weel kenned a man to do the like at hame. It was chappin' nine by the clock when the minister cam hame to his supper, to tak' the Book, an' decently to gang to his bed, nae doot wi' the approval o' his conscience that he had dune a good day's wark.'

'An' it's time that we were a' in oor beds!' said my wife.

14. THE GLEN KELLS SHORT LEET

There was a silence in all the chambers of the manse of Glen Kells. A wet and dreary wind wailed about it and shook the rain-drops off the Scotch firs that sheltered it. Hushed footsteps moved to and fro in the kitchen, with occasional pauses, as if conscious of their own inappropriateness. There was the dank trail of many wheels on the narrow gravelled walk before the porch. The rain stood in them as in the dismalest of canals. It was the day after the minister's funeral.

In an upper room two women sat looking out at the rain. The younger held the hand of the elder; but in this room also there was silence. They were silent, for they had seen their old life crumble like a swallow's nest in the rain, and they had not yet seen the possibility of any new life rise before them. So they sat and looked at the rain, and it seemed that there was nothing for them to do but to go forward for ever and ever—the rain beating about them, their feet

'Deep down in a drift of dead leaves.'

There was a 'short leet'—mystic words, not understood of the Southron—in the Glen of the Kells. The 'short leet' did not come all at once—this had been too much happiness, tending to make kirk 'members and adherents' lose distinction in their joys. But they came—there were just three of them, the leet beiner the shortest of leets—each for a Sabbath into the glen, preaching at noon in the kirk, and in the evening in the school-house of the clachan. Yet all but one went away feeling that, whoever was the man, it could not possibly be he, for the congregation of the hill-folk at each diet of worship sat silent and expressionless, while fiery denunciation and thunderous exhortation passed them over sitting there equal-minded and unscathed. The first who preached was the Rev. James Augustus Towers, assistant in St. Mungo's in Edinburgh, no less. He had been pitched upon as the likely man as soon as the list had been made up by the 'co-mi-tee'—the assembly of office-bearers and honourable men not a few of the parish of Glen Kells. The Rev. James Augustus Towers was a distinguished assistant. He had

been brought out, a very callow fledgling, under the aristocratic wing of the great Dr. Paton, the Distinguished Critic and Superior Person of the whole church. There he learned that Presbyterianism had no claims on any man's admiration—that Presbytery was singularly unbeautiful—that the Beautiful alone was the Good—that a Creed was a most inconvenient incumbrance—that enthusiasm made a man hot and ridiculous, whilst the cultured calms and ordered forms of the Anglican church, as understood by her higher clergy, were the only things really worthy of admiration, though even these must be carefully denuded of all meaning. Such was the equipment wherewith the Rev. James Augustus Towers undertook to become a candidate for the suffrages of the herds and farmers of Glen Kells. He brought his own gown and cassock from Edinburgh, and had a coloured cloth hanging over his back when he preached in the kirk in the morning. The sermon was lost to the Glen of the Kells, for nobody ever heard a word of it, so intent were their eyes on this new thing, unknown and unimagined, that had come into their midst. The 'Frees' said it was 'a rag of Rome,' while the U.P.s up at St. John's Town said that it was 'nocht less than the mark of the beast.' But 'Clicky' Steward, the grieve at Craigencaillie, who had never attended church with any regularity before, and who meant to vote as an adherent, said, with a strong expression which those who know him will recognise, 'Say as ye like, the lad wi' the tippet's the boy for me!' And there were not a few of 'Clicky's' mind. All the candidates stayed at the manse, past which the Kells water was slipping gently as of old. The late minister's widow was still in possession, and it was expected by the not unkindly folk that she would not have to flit till May— 'she wad get time to look about her.'

Gavin Ross had died a poor man, but he had not forgotten to make what provision he could for his wife and daughter. Indeed, there had no day dawned and no night fallen since ever he married when he did not bear this within him next the very skin of his naked soul. The mother and daughter had looked over the possibilities—to go to Edinburgh, and there to take the

better kind of house and try the old sad plan of keeping lodgers, which none who undertake have their trials to seek; to settle in Cairn Edward and open a little school, where no doubt Margaret could get a few pupils in music and French. But in the heart of Margaret Ross there often came a thought which never visited that of her mother, that the best of these prospects was miserably inadequate to the supply of her mother's needs on anything like the scale to which she was accustomed. She felt that it lay on her to keep her mother, whose heart had never recovered from the shock of her husband's death—all whose sorrow was now bound up in the thought that before long she must leave the manse to which she had come as a bride on Gavin Ross's arm so many years ago.

Into this home of silence came the Rev. James Augustus Towers, and his attitude was as condescending and superior as though he were already master of the manse, and the pale women-folk but lodgers on sufferance. He made himself at home—in carpet slippers, for it was only in the pulpit that he covered himself with the vain gauds of adornment. As soon as he came to a dining-table, or into a drawing-room—then, ah! then, in spite of the veneer of culture, it was in the power of the most casual observer to trace, with half an eye, 'The still triumphant carrot through!'

The Rev. James Augustus Towers, assistant in the kirk of St. Mungo, sat at the fire in the manse dining room while Margaret Ross helped Janet to take the things to the kitchen after dinner. He kept his back steadily to them, being content with himself and secure of his chances. Then he lay at length in an easy-chair and picked his teeth, while the carpet slippers sunned themselves on Gavin Ross's fender.

It was the night when the Third Candidate was expected at the manse of Kells. He had never been there before, but a friend of the banker who was convener of committee had heard the lad preach in a neighbouring parish, and that very powerful man had exerted his influence—no light thing in a community of small farmers—to have Christopher Murray put on the list, and afterwards drafted into the mystic trio of the short

leet. The Second Candidate had come and gone, without leaving any impression; 'his name was indeed writ in water.' Had he known it, he owed this to the banker. He was the son of the prominent ecclesiast who was prime minister of the local Presbytery—'could twist them roon' his wee finger,' it was said. Now the banker had no idea of committing the affairs of the parish to this prominent father in the church

'Of laree discourse and excellent taste in wines.'

He had received a letter from the wife of this gentleman, who was a distant kin of his own, an epistle evidently inspired by a hand heavily clerkly and presbyterial, recounting the marvels of her son's academic career, and all his later fitness for the position of minister of the parish of Glen Kells. This was hardly fair to the youth, who, in spite of his training, was a really modest lad. But the banker, a man wise in counsel as kindly in heart, smiled as he wrote him down on his official list, under the column devoted to testimonials— By whom recommended. 'The Rev. Roderick Rorison, recommended by his mother.' And the smile was as wide and as long as the Glen Kells in twenty-four hours after the next committee meeting, while the young man's chances had utterly vanished away.

At the Bank as well as in the Manse there was expectancy going out towards the gig of the farmer of Drumrash, in which the last man on the short leet was to make his way up the Glen of the Kells Water. On its jiggling and swaying eminence the other two had likewise made their exits and their entrances. For Glen Kells believed in giving every man an equal chance — except the banker, who smiled to himself as he thought of the Rev. Peter Rorison, folding his comfortable hands and looking across to his wife as if between them they had already annexed the Glen of the Kells to their diocese. But the banker was far from comfortable; for, though he wished the Rev. Christopher Murray well, he knew that if he failed to please, the only alternative was the Rev. James Augustus Towers—and the banker did not admire the 'tippet.'

When Christopher Murray topped the brae at the

head of which the manse stood, he was thinking of nothing higher than the prospect of a cup of tea and a quiet fire by which to spend the evening and read the book which he had brought with him in his black bag. He pulled at the manse bell, and somewhere far down the stone passages he heard it ring. It had a fixed and settled sound, quite different from the deafening clangour of the town house bells, where, when you pull an innocent-looking knob in a lintel, you seem to set in motion a complete church peal immediately on the other side of the door. Christopher Murray was ready to tell the maid whom he expected to open the door that he was the minister come to supply on the next day. He was prepared for that look of compassion for his youth which he knew so well, which said as plain as words could say, 'Puir lad, little do ye ken what's afore ye in this parish!' But he was not prepared for what he did see. A slender girl in black, fair as a lily, stood in the dark of the doorway, waiting for him to speak. Speak he did, but what he said he could never remember; for he found himself, with his hat in his hand, endeavouring to apologise for some offence which, though quite clear to himself, he was strangely unable to express in words. He felt himself uncouth, ungainly, coltish, generally 'in the road,' but he never got any great length with putting it into words; for in an incredibly short time he found himself mysteriously at home in the manse parlour, an apartment unpenetrated by the assurance of the Rev. James Augustus Towers, or the illustrious ancestry of the Rev. Roderick Rorison; where, at the head of her mother's invalid sofa, his eyes could watch the busy fingers and flower-like face of Margaret Ross, pathetic in her black dress. Christopher Murray was an orphan, and had little knowledge of the life of the home, but he says now that his aspirations for a home of his own dated from this time. It is safest to believe a man when he tells you little coincidences of this kind. Very likely he believes them himself.

The fateful morrow came, and the last man on the leet proved himself no bungler. He preached straight from the shoulder. There were more there at night than had been in the forenoon, a thing that had not been

known in the Glen Kells in the memory of man. This is what old Betty Grierson said; she was a great critic of sermons, and they say that even Mr. Rorison was feared for her: "Deed, sirs, I howp the fear o' God has been gien to that young man, for of a truth the fear o' man has been withhauden from him," which was better than twenty testimonials in the parish. The banker smiled, for he knew that the 'tippet' had now small chance of being aired a second time in the kirk of the Glen Kells.

So Christopher Murray is now placed minister in the Glen of the Kells, and has a good prospect of a home of his own. But Mrs. Ross and her daughter Margaret are still in the manse, and the young minister is lodging for a time over the shop in the village. The Rosses have given up the little house they had taken in Cairn Edward, and Christopher Murray smiles like a man well pleased when the people ask him when he is going into the manse. He does not think that Mrs. Ross will be troubled to move out of the old manse overhanging the Kells Water in which she has lived so long, and he has the best of reasons for his belief.

15. BOANERGES SIMPSON'S ENCUMBRANCE

Everyone said that it was a pity of Boanerges Simpson, the minister of St. Tudno's. This was universally recognised in Maitland. Not only the congregation of St. Tudno's, but the people of other denominations knew that Mr. Simpson was saddled with a wife who was little but a drag upon him. They even said that he had been on the point of obtaining a call to a great city charge, when, his domestic circumstances being inquired into, it was universally recognised by the session of that company of humble followers of Christ that, however suitable the Rev. Boanerges Simpson might be to receive £1200 a year for preaching the Carpenter's gospel to it, Mrs. Boanerges Simpson was not at all the woman to dispense afternoon tea to the session's spouses between the hours of three and six.

It was, however, also well known that the minister of St. Tudno's bore up under this household trial like an angel. His quiet patience with his help unmeet became a proverb. He had a bland, vague, upward-looking eye, and walked as one wrapped in the mysteries of such deep thought as few could fathom. When any one glanced at his particular sufferings, he sighed and passed lightly to another subject. He had a softly episcopal handshake which made some women call him blessed, and many men itch to kick him. This handshake was one of his chief assets.

But his great power came out in his sermons. Even his enemies admitted that he was noble in the pulpit. Yet he was not a natural orator. He had not the readiness of resource, the instantaneousness of attack and defence requisite for the speaker. His sermons were given in an exquisitely varied recitative, and when he redelivered them, it was often remarked with admiration that he placed the emphasis on the same words, made the same pauses, and became affected as close to tears as decorum would permit, in precisely the same places.

His care in preparation was often held up to his brother ministers in the town of Maitland, among whom he was not popular, owing, no doubt, to the jealousy

which prevails in all professions. Still, they had him often to preach for them, for no minister in the country could draw such a crowd—or such a collection. There were half a dozen rich old ladies who were known to have Mr. Simpson in their wills, and these accompanied him about wherever he preached, like Tabbies following a milk jug. There were also a good many ladies of various ages who visited at the manse of St. Tudno's at hours when the Reverend Boanerges was known to be resting from the labours of sermon-production in the drawing-room. They did not often see his wife. She, no doubt, felt herself quite unpresentable, poor thing! So one of the visitors was asked to dispense tea. This was generally recognised to be as it should be.

The town of Maitland came as near to being a city as some fools come to being geniuses. Maitland has an ancient, and, in its early stages, an honourable history. It had been a great city when the capital of Scotland was a barren rock, and when the fisher steered his coracle below the lonely braes of the Clydeside Broomielaw. In its latter days it had taken to the manufacture of thread and the digging of coal. But its burghers have still much pride about them, severely tempered with economy.

Some years ago Maitland resolved on having new municipal buildings. The ancient town hall was also in its under story the gaol, and it was not seemly that the bailies and the very provost should be compelled to listen to the sighing of the prisoner whom they had just committed for being drunk and disorderly, and who in the cells beneath still audibly continued to be the latter. The town hall was, therefore, abandoned to the victims of police interference, and the new municipal buildings rose nobly in the middle of the town.

But when the first assessment of one and tenpence in the pound was made on the ratepayers, they rose in instant rebellion. Letters in the local papers could not ease the smart. They must have the blood of the whole town council, and specially of the bailies. The provost was held to be a decent man who had been led into this bad business against his will. This provost was the paragon of provosts. He spoke broad Scots, and

spoke it, too, with a rollicking local accent which went straight to the heart of every Maitland man and woman. He had wrinkles round his eyes, and the meditative way with him which all meal millers achieve from leaning their elbows on the lower halves of their mill doors. He sometimes came to the council with the white dust of his profession emphasising his homeliness. The Rev. Boanerges Simpson had a pique at the provost. The trenchant Doric sense of the layman cut through the pretentious unction of the cleric like a knife through soap. But hitherto the opposition had been private, for the provost had the strange taste to prefer the invisible and incompatible wife to the active and brilliant husband.

The matter of the municipal buildings came to a head over the town bell. There was an indignation meeting summoned by aggrieved ratepayers, and all the correspondents of the local newspapers attended in force. The Rev. Boanerges Simpson proposed the first resolution, 'That it is the opinion of this meeting that the proposal to waste the ratepayers' money in a bell to be used for profane purposes is subversive of all morality and good government, and the provost and magistrates (except Councillor MacBean of the Third Ward, who voted against it) are requested to resign forthwith.' The Rev. Boanerges was not so fluent as usual. His forte was the pulpit. He liked to keep himself before the public, but he lacked in a gathering of men his personal following of old ladies, and had not quite his usual nerve in consequence. The motion was, however, unanimously carried, and that with great acclamation. Resolution after resolution was carried, each more sweeping than the last. Enthusiastic indignation rose feverishly till the burgesses were almost committed to burning the magistrates in front of their own doors. Now the provost had been all day from home, and did not hear of the meeting till some time after his return.

'I'll gie mysel' a bit wash an' gang doon,' he said, quietly.

When he stepped on the platform he was received with a storm of howls. The meeting would not hear him.

Councillor MacBean, who had the credit of being able to swing the Third Ward like a dead cat, and who thought of standing for provost, led the groans.

The provost waited smiling. He dusted the meal from the creases of his coat, and brushed up his grey soft hat with his elbow. He even got out his knife to pare his nails. At last he got in a word, and as soon as ever his sonorous steady Scots was heard the storm fell to a dead calm, for the only man who could sway a Maitland audience was on his feet, and the provost knew that the hearts of these men were like wax in his hands. This was the matter of his speech:

'My freens, Aw was up at Allo Kirk the day, an' div ye ken what the craiturs war sayin'? Na, ye'll no' believe me gin Aw tell ye. The assurance o' the upsetting creests is juist by ordinar'. Ye ken that Allo Kirk can never forgie Maitland for bein' a bigger, bonnier, aulder toon, and for haein' the kings an' queens o' braid Scotland lying in oor aibbey yaird ower by. Wha but a wheen Allo Kirk jute fowk an' ither upstart tinkler bodies wad lie ablow the jow o' the Allo Kirk bell.'

Cries of 'Come to the point!' 'We dinna want to hear about Allo Kirk. It's aboot oor ain bell we want to hear.' 'Ye'll no' throw stoor in oor een, provost!'

'Bide a wee, I'm juist comin' to that. This is what the Allo Kirk fowk were sayin'. Ye ken the thocht o' oor braw new toon buildin' is juist gall and wormwud to them. They ken that their toon hall wadna be a back kitchen to the Maitland fowk's, an' sae, to even themsel's to' us, what hae the blasties dune but gotten a bell to hing in their bit toorock—a twenty-ton bell, nae less. An,' says they, the like o' that bell wull never ring in Maitland toon! Na, the puir feckless, bankrupt bodies o' Maitland, wi' their thread an' their coals, canna afford sic a bell as Allo Kirk has! Whatna answer wull ye gie back, ma frien's? Wull ye let Allo Kirk crawl ower you? Wull ye sit doon like Henny-penny in the hornbuik wi' your finger in your mooth? Na, ye're Maitland men, and as sure as yer provost is a Maitland man we'll hing a thirty-ton bell in oor braw too'er, and ilka jow o't, soondin' across the water, wull tell the Allo Kirk bodies that they're but cauld kail an' soor dook beside the

burghers o' the Auld Grey Toon!'

The meeting here rose in a frenzy. The thirty-ton bell was voted. MacBean was put out feet foremost for moving the previous question, and the Rev. Boanerges Simpson went home to bring his wife to a sense of her position. After this the provost was more inclined than before to like his worsted antagonist, and even got into the habit of attending the church of St. Tudno.

What bothered him most was the quality of the sermons of the Rev. Boanerges Simpson. They were certainly full of a subtle sympathy with the suffering and down-trodden. An exquisite pathos welled through them. It was a remarkable fact that some of the most impartial and intelligent of the congregation listened to these productions with their eyes shut, in order that they might not have the contrast of the preacher's oleaginous presence and his thrilling words. It was also observed and commented upon that on the occasions when every eye in the church was riveted upon the preacher, his own wife never so much as raised her eyes from the bookboard. This was set down to a nature averse to the message of grace which so strongly affected others. The provost's sister called his attention to this, and even the good man was somewhat shaken in his belief in the minister's wife. Whatever her private opinion of her husband, she should certainly have shown her reverence for a man so highly gifted with a message.

Day by day, therefore, Mrs. Simpson shrank more and more into her own silence. Isolation grew upon her till she had walled herself off from her fellow-creatures. Then she stopped going to church at all, and the Rev. Boanerges walked along with the seraphic smile of a martyr whose burden was almost more than he could bear. His sermons became too high strung and ethereal for the edification of the workaday sons and daughters of men. What was the most extraordinary thing of all, the pathos and sentiment, the spiritual communion, were so clearly a personal experience of the preacher, that even those who had been repelled by his personality gave him credit for having such communion with the unseen as few are privileged to attain to in this

world. There was a deep belief in Maitland that there can be no effect without a sufficient cause, for Maitland is above all things a logical place. St. Tudno's became a shrine of pilgrimage from far and near, and its gifted and saintly minister seemed to be mellowing from a Boanerges into a John. It was thought that what he was suffering at home was refining his soul. It is thus that the finest spirits are moulded. The provost was so touched that he went to ask his pardon for any hasty expressions which he might have used in the affair of the bell. Mrs. Simpson received him and listened with a dull silence to his frank and kindly words.

'Your guidman an' me haes oor differences,' said the provost; 'but I wull alloo that there's naebody atween Tweed an' Tay can come within a lang sea mile o' him for preachin'.'

The minister's wife made a strange reply.

'Would you say as much a year from now, if many other people were to turn against him?' she asked, lifting her abased eyes and letting them rest for a moment on the kindly face of the good provost.

'Aw'm gye an' weel used to stickin' to my opeenion,' said the meal miller. 'Aw hae seen the Maitland fowk's verdick come roon' to mine a deal oftener than mine whurl about to theirs!'

'Then you'll be a friend to my husband in the days to come,' she said, earnestly.

'That Aw wull!' said the provost, heartily.

'Thank you,' said Mrs. Simpson; 'thank you more than I can tell you. That is what I've been praying for. I shall sleep sound tonight!'

And she did. Only she forgot to awaken the next morning. The funeral was a great one, for the sake of the bereaved man; but every one felt that a barrier to the success of the preacher had been providentially removed. On the Sabbath following there was such a congregation as has never been seen since within the walls of St. Tudno's. The minister surpassed himself. There was not a dry eye between the topmost gallery and the back seat below the loft where the provost sat. Now, in that church it was the custom of the elders to take in the Bible and bring it out to the vestry

afterwards. This they did in rotation. It was the provost's day. As he lifted the Bible, the sermon slid to the floor. He picked it up, glanced at it, and turned pale. Then he sat down to recover himself. The funeral sermon was neatly written out in Mrs. Simpson's own hand.

The Rev. Boanerges never preached another great sermon—never one even mediocre. It was said that grief had permanently weakened his faculties. It is strange that men cannot benefit by the opportunities which Providence makes for them. There were many who wondered that the provost stood by him; but the meal miller was not the man to forget a word passed to a dead woman, and he kept her secret well. He was (and is) the pearl of provosts.

As for the Rev. Boanerges, he married again within a year, a maiden lady with £50,000 in consols and a temper—both her own. Her husband is a man of great reputation. He has retired to a comfortable estate in the Highlands, which shows that true merit is always rewarded. He has since put out two volumes of sermons, which are allowed by the religious press to be among the most subtle and suggestive which have been published this century. They ought to be in every preacher's library. His first wife had carefully copied them all out for the printer, which seems to be about the only useful thing she did during her life. But the funeral sermon was written in the minister's large sprawling characters. There is no monument over the grave of the first Mrs. Simpson, but the provost often walks out there of an evening and lays a white rose upon it.

16. A KNIGHT-ERRANT OF THE STREETS

Cleg Kelly was out of his latitude, and knew it. He was a Pleasance laddie, and he lived in one of the garret rooms of a big 'land,' as full of passages and bye-ways as a rabbit warren. He was not a Christian, was Cleg Kelly. Neither was his father. He said he was a 'snow-shoveller,' and as his profession could be carried on during a very limited number of days in the year, he made his fellow-citizens chargeable for his keep during the rest of the year, and personally collected the needful. So his fellow-citizens thoughtfully provided for his accommodation a splendid edifice on the side of the Calton—the same which American tourists wax enthusiastic about as they come into the Scots metropolis by the North British Railway, mistaking its battlemented towers for those of Edinburgh Castle.

Here Mr. Timothy Kelly occupied a beautifully clean and healthy apartment for at least six months in the year. During this time he worked at a Government contract, and so, of course, could not devote much time to the education of his son and heir. But Tim Kelly, though a fascinating study, must not tempt us away from his equally accomplished son. As was said at the beginning, Cleg Kelly was out of his latitude, and he did not like it. It was Sunday afternoon, and he had been across the narrow isthmus of houses which separates the Alps of the Salisbury Crags from the Lombard plain of the Meadows. He had been putting in his attendances at five Sunday Schools that day, for it was the leafy month of June when 'trips' abound, and Cleg Kelly was not quite so green as the summer foliage; besides all which, about five o'clock there are lots of nice clean children in that part of the town on their way home from 'Congregational' Sabbath schools. These did not speak to Cleg, for he only went to the Mission schools which were specially adapted for such as he. Also, he wore no stockings. But Cleg Kelly was not bashful, so he readily spoke to them. He noted, especially, a spruce party of three leaving a chemist's shop on the shortest track between the park and the meadows, and he followed them down through the

narrow defile of Gifford Park—thoughts of petty larceny crystallising in his heart. Ere they could escape through the needle's eye at the further end, Cleg Kelly had accosted them after his kind.

'Hey, you, gie's that gundy, or I'll knock your turnip heids thegither!' The three lambs stood at bay, huddled close together, and helplessly bleated feeble derisives at the wolf who has headed them off from safety; but their polite and Englishy tone was a source of Homeric laughter to this Thersites of the Pleasance. He mocked their decent burgher attire; he sparred up to them—his 'neives' describing stately circles like a paddle wheel—and, shaking a murky fist an inch below their several noses' he invited them individually to 'smell that,' and then inform him where they would like it applied—together with other resourceful amenities, as the auctioneer's advertisements say, too numerous to mention. While the marauding wolf was thus at play with his innocent victims, scorning their feeble efforts at rejoinder, and circumventing without difficulty their yet feebler efforts at flight, it so happened that a member of the city force, to whom Master Cleg Kelly was well known, stopped for a moment to look down the aristocratic avenues of the park, bordered with frugal lines of 'ash buckets' for all ornament. The coincidence of necessity and presence is remarkable, but not unprecedented. He was a young officer of but eighteen months' standing, and his district had been previously in the 'Sooth Back,' a district to which the talent of Master Kelly was indigenous. Had the officer been six months more in the service, he would probably have contented himself with a warning trumpet note which would have sent the enemy flying; but being young and desirous of small distinctions, he determined to 'nab the young scamp and take him along.' He had full justification for this, for at this moment a howl told that the assault had reached the stage of battery, and that the young 'gundy' garrotter was qualifying for the cat at an early age, by committing robbery with violence.

It was at this moment that Cleg felt that there's no place like home. He was a stranger in a strange land, where he knew not even the walls that had nicks

in them, climbable by the sooty toe of an eleven-year-old city boy. He could not tell whether any particular 'land' had a ladder and trap-door—valuable right-of-way upon the roof. He knew not the alleys which gave double exit by unexpected elbows, and he could not shun those which invited with fair promises, but which were really traps with no way of escape. He did not wish, in that awful moment, that he had been a better boy, as his young Sunday-school teacher in Hunker Court had often urged him to become; what he wanted was the 'Sooth Back,' ten yards start, and the rigour of the game. But there was no time for meditation, for the heavy-footed but alert young 'bobby' was almost upon him. Cleg Kelly sprang sideways and dived into the first convenient entry. Then he skimmed up some steps that wound skyward, down again, and along a passage with not a single side turning. He heard his pursuer lumbering after him, and his own heart kettle-drumming in his ears. An unexpected doorway gave outward as his weight came on it, and he found himself in a curious court somewhere at the back of Simon Square, as near as he could make out. There was a strange square block towards one side of the open space, round which he ran; and, climbing up a convenient rone or water pipe, he squirmed himself through a stair window, crossed the landing of an uninhabited house, and looked down on the interior of a court which was well known to him, from the safe elevation of a first-floor window. As he rested, panting, he said to himself that he 'kenned where he was noo.' It was the court which contained one of his too numerous Sunday schools. Hunker Court Mission School was 'scaling.' As it was the school where there was most 'fun,' it was also the school which was best beloved by that scholar who was duly enrolled in Miss Celie Tennant's class (No. 6) as—C. Kelly, age 14, Residence, 200 Pleasance.—the age being a gratuitous impromptu on the part of Cleg in order to impress his teacher with a sense of his importance—in his own language, 'a big lee.' 'Fun' in this Mission school meant chiefly bombarding the teachers as they ran the gauntlet after the school was dismissed, specially one, who for private

reasons was known as 'Pun' o' Cannles.' All this happened years ago, and of course there are no such schools in Edinburgh now. But Celie Tennant, a cheery little lady with the brightest eyes that Cleg had ever seen, had never been molested. This day Cleg watched, with the delight of the bird that has just escaped the fowler's snare, the 'clodding' of the teachers, and their discomposed look as the missiles interfered with their dignity. He was a connoisseur in these matters, and applauded critically as a cunningly directed cabbage heart dropped reposcfully into 'Pun' o' Cannles' tail pocket. He remembered how his cars had rung under the very hand which now extracted the cabbage under a galling cross fire. He observed how Humpy Joe, the pride of Simon Square, deftly removed the 'lum hat' of the newest teacher, who had yet to learn what clothes to come in when he set out to instruct the youth of Gifford Park. He saw with complaisance Archie Drabble, the 'deil' of the school, prepare a hand grenade of moist mud for the superintendent, as he thought. The young idea of the city needs not to be taught how to shoot. He rubbed his hands with glee to think how juicily and satisfactorily the 'pyeowe' would spread, and he became distinctly particeps criminibus as the most gleeful of accessories before the fact.

But at this moment out walked his own teacher, Miss Tennant, on her way home through Archer's Hall by way of the Meadows. Now Cleg Kelly was secretly and desperately in love with his teacher, and he would willingly have gone to school every Sunday, simply to be scolded by her for misbehaviour. He found that this was the best way to keep her attention fixed upon him; and the boy who sat next him in class had a poor time of it. It pleased Cleg to notice that his teacher had a new summer hat and dress on, one that he had not seen before. Cleg became sorry, for the first time, that he had waited to take it out of these 'softies.' This was the nearest that he ever came to repentance. It struck him that he might have looked at the hat and dress, and the face between, for an hour. It is a mistake to think that boys do not notice dress. The boy, as has been said before more than once, is the father of the man. Cleg

was complacently feeling a proprietary interest in both the summer hat and bright print dress, when suddenly his eye caught the slouching figure of Archie Drabble, standing exactly beneath. Cleg's face whitened as he took in his intention. Could it be to desecrate the spotless hat and dress of his, Cleg's, teacher, hitherto held inviolate by the strange chivalry of Hunker Court School?

Small time there was for the true knight to don his armour and ride cap-a-pie into the lists. There was no time to blow a trumpet, even had one been handy. There were no heralds to announce the victory of the champion of distressed demoiselles; but all these could not have rendered the feat of arms (if so it might be called which was mostly legs) more rounded and complete. As the cowardly arm of the 'Drabble'—fit name for knight unknighly—paused a moment to gather force for the dastard's blow; and even as the unconscious lady of the Road Perilous half turned to settle her skirts into a daintier swing, a bolt fell from the blue, a deus from the machina—a small boy arrayed completely in two well-ventilated garments, sprang with horrid yell from a first-floor window, and, sudden as Jove's thunderbolt, struck the audacious Drabble to the earth. Then springing up, this impish Mercury of Hunker Court dowsed the prostrate one with his own hand grenade, hoisted him with a grimy foot in lieu of a petard, once more returned him to earth with that clenched organ to which the 'softies' had been invited to apply their noses. Having performed a war dance on the prostrate foe which had small store of knightly courtesy in it, Cleg, with the derring-do of battle upon him, dared the assembled Mission to the unequal fray; and, no champion accepting, presently took himself off, as unconventionally as he came, turning three double cart wheels through the archway that led in the direction of the Meadows. So uplifted was he by the pride of success, that he looked about valiantly for the 'bobby.' He was not in sight.

'It's as weel for him!' said the hero of battles. As Miss Celie Tennant waited at her own gate a moment that afternoon, she was aware, as heroines often are, of

the presence of a hero. He was small and very dirty, and he stood by a lamp-post abstracted, scratching one bare leg with the toe of the other foot. It is a primeval attitude, and Sir John Lubbock will be able to explain it. Something familiar caught the lady's attention.

'Is that you, Charles?' she asked; 'why didn't you come to Sunday school today?' She was under the impression that C in her roll-book stood for Charles. This was a mistake.

Charles gasped inarticulately, and was understood to say that he would be on view next Sabbath without fail. Celie Tennant patted him kindly on the head, tripped gracefully up the steps, and paused to nod ere she reached the door. Not till then did Cleg Kelly find his tongue.

'Pit on the new frock,' he said, 'dinna be feared, Airchie Drabble 'ill throw nae mair glaur!'

'Thank you, Charles!' said the summer hat, in sweet unconsciousness of his meaning, as the door closed. This is how Cleg Kelly began to be a Christian.

17. THE PROGRESS OF CLEG KELLY, MISSION WORKER

Inquiring friends request the latest news of Mr. C. Kelly, of the 'Sooth Back.' We are most happy to supply them, for Cleg is a favourite of our own. Since we revealed how he began to become a Christian, Cleg has felt himself more or less of a public character; but he is modest, and for several weeks has kept out of our way, apparently lest he should be put into another book. A too appreciative superintendent unfortunately read the plain little story of Cleg's gallant knight-errantry to the senior division of his sometime school, and Cleg blushed to find himself famous. Consequently he left Hunker Court for good. But for all that he is secretly pleased to be in a book, and having received our most fervent assurance that he will not be made into a 'tract,' he has signified that he is appeased, and that no legal proceedings will be taken.

Cleg does not so much mind a book, a book is respectable; but he draws the line at tracts. He says that he is 'doon on them tracks.' Even as a reformed character they raise the old Adam in him. A good lady, sweeping by in her carriage the other day, threw one graciously to the ragged lad, who was standing in a moment of meditation pirouetting his cap on the point of his boot, half for the pleasure of seeing that he had actually a boot upon his foot, and half to intimate to all concerned that he has not become proud and haughty because of the fact. The good lady was much surprised by that small boy's action, and has a poorer opinion than ever of the 'lower orders.'

She is now sure that there must be some very careful grading in heaven before it can be a comfortable place of permanent residence. Her idea of doing good has always been to go through the houses of the poor with the gracious hauteur of a visitant from another and a better world, and to scatter broadcast largess of tracts and good advice. The most pleasant way of doing this, she finds, is from a carriage, for some of the indigent have a way of saying most unpleasant things; but a pair of spanking bays can sweep away from all

expressions of opinion. Besides, tracts delivered in this way bring with them a sense of proper inferiority as coming from one who would say, 'There, take that, you poor wicked people, and may it do you good!' Cleg Kelly was 'again' tracks.' But after a single moment of stupefied surprise that this woman should insult him, he rushed for the tract. The lady smiled at his eagerness, and pointed out to her companion, a poor lady whose duty it was to agree with her mistress, the eager twinkling eyes and flushed face of Cleg as he pursued the bays. Cleg at short distances could beat any pair of horses in Edinburgh. He had not raced with bobbies and fire-engines for nothing. He was in fine training, and just as the carriage slackened to turn past the immense conglomerate castle which guards the St. Leonard's Park entrance, Cleg shot up to the side at which his benefactor sat. He swiftly handed her a parcel, and so vanished from the face of the earth. There is no safer hiding-place than the coal-waggons full and empty that stand in thousands just over the wall. The good lady opened the little parcel with her usual complaisance. It was her own tract, and it contained a small selection of articles—the staple product, indeed, of the Pleasance ash-buckets—imprimis, one egg-shell filled with herring bones, item — a cabbage top in fine gamey condition, the head of a rat some time deceased, and the tail of some other animal so worn by age as to make identification uncertain. On the top lay the dirtiest of all scrawls. It said, 'With thanks for yer traks.' The lady fell back on her cushions so heavily that the C springs creaked, and the poor companion groped frantically for the smelling-bottle. She knew that she would have a dreadful time of it that night; but her mistress has resolved that she will distribute no more tracts from her carriage. The lower orders may just be left to perish. Their blood be on their own heads; she has once and for all washed her hands of them.

Many people may be of opinion that Cleg Kelly, judging by his first exploit this Friday morning of which we speak, had not advanced very far along the narrow-way of righteousness; but this was not Cleg's own

opinion. He felt that he had done a good deed, and he said within himself, 'Them ould women dae mair ill wi' their tracks than twa penny gaffs an' a side-show!' Then Cleg Kelly went on to his next business. It had to do with keeping the fifth commandment. He had heard about it the Sunday before, not at the forsaken Hunker Court, but at a little class for foot of the Pleasance, in a court there, which his teacher, Miss Celie Tennant, was organising for lads of Cleg's age or a little older. It was a daring undertaking for one so young, and all her friends tried to stop her, and called it foolhardy; but Celie Tennant being, as Cleg admiringly said, 'no' big, but most mighty plucky,' had found out her power in managing the most rebellious larrikins that walked on hobnails. Moreover, the work had sought her, not she it. Her praises had been so constantly chanted by Cleg that she had been asked to take pity on a number of the 'Sooth Back gang,' and have a class for them in the evenings. It was manifestly impossible to receive such a number of wild loons at Hunker Court. They were every one upon terms of open war with the Gifford Park trainbands; and had a couple of them shown their faces in the neighbourhood at any hour of the day or night, the 'Cooee-EE' of the Park would have sounded, and fists and brick-bats would have been going in a couple of shakes. Clearly, then, as they could not come to her without breaking her Majesty's peace, it was her duty to go to them. To do them justice, they were quite willing to risk it; but Celie felt that it would hardly be doing herself justice to sow her seed so very near to the fowls of the air. So Cleg proudly took his friend down to the 'Sooth Back,' where there was a kind-hearted watchman who had occasionally let Cleg sleep in some warm place about the 'works' at which he was on night duty. To him Miss Tennant was introduced, and by him was taken into the presence of the junior partner, who was sitting in a very easy attitude indeed, with his back against his desk, and balancing himself precariously on one leg of a stool. He effected a descent successfully, and blushed becomingly, for he was a very junior partner indeed, and he had more than once met Miss Tennant at a West-end evening party. But when Miss

Celie, infinitely self-possessed, stated her business in clear-cut accents of maidenly reserve, the Very Junior Partner instantly manifested almost too great an interest in the concern, and offered the use of a disused storeroom where there was a good fireplace.

'I shall see to it, Miss Tennant,' he said, 'that there is a fire for you there whenever you wish to use the room.'

'Thank you, Mr. Iverach,' returned Celie, with just the proper amount of gratitude, 'but I would not dream of troubling you. One of my boys will do that.'

The Very Junior would have liked to say that he did not consider it quite the thing for a young lady to be in the purlieu of the 'Sooth Back' after nightfall. Indeed, he would have been glad to offer his escort; but he did not say so, for he was a very nice Junior Partner indeed, and his ingenuous blush was worth a fortune to him as a certificate of character. He therefore contented himself with saying:

'If there is anything that I can do for you, you will always be good enough to let me know.'

Celie Tennant thanked him, and gave him her hand. He came as far as the street with her, but did not offer to see her home. He was no fool, though so Very Junior a Partner.

Celie Tennant established her night-school in the Sooth Back with Cleg Kelly as her man Friday. Cleg showed at once a great faculty for organisation, and he added the function of police to his other duties. On the principle of 'Set a thief,' etc., he ought to have made the best of policemen, and so he did. He was not by any means the biggest or the heaviest, but he had far more wild-cat in him than any of his mates. Once he had taken the gully on the Salisbury Crags on his way to safety, when he was too much pressed by force of circumstances to go round the ordinary way; and it was quite an everyday habit of his to call upon his friends by way of the roof and the skylights therein.

Celie Tennant was opening her night-school this Friday evening, and Cleg Kelly was on his way thither to get the key from the porter, his good friend at most times. He knew where there was an old soap-box which

would make rare kindling, and he had a paraffin cask also in his mind, though as yet he had not made any inquiries as to the ownership of this latter. On his way he rushed up to the seldom-visited garret that was the domicile of his parent, Mr. Timothy Kelly, when he came out of gaol. During these intervals Cleg withdrew himself from night quarters, only occasionally reconnoitring the vicinity, if he wanted any of his hid treasures very keenly. He had as many as twenty 'hidie-holes' in the floor, walls, eaves, and roof of the wretched dwelling that was his only home. Some of these his father frequently broke into, and scattered his poor horde, confiscating the coppers, and sending the other valuables through the glassless windows, but on the whole Cleg could beat his parent at the game of hide-and-seek. When the evening came, however, Cleg hovered in the neighbourhood till he saw whether his father went straight from his lair, growling and grumbling, to Hare's Public, or remained in bed on the floor with certain curious implements around him. If the latter were the case, Cleg vanished, and was seen no more in the neighbourhood for some days, because he knew well that his father was again qualifying for her Majesty's hospitality, and that was a business he always declined to be mixed up in. He knew that his father would in all probability be 'lagged' by the morrow's morn. Cleg hoped that he would be, and the longer sentence his father got, the better pleased his son was. Once when Timothy Kelly got six months for house-breaking, a small boy was ignominiously expelled from the backbenches of the court for saying, 'Hip, Hooray.' It was Cleg. His father, however, heard, and belted him for it unmercifully when he came out, saying between every stroke and bound, 'Take that, ye sorra! Was it for this I brought yez up, ye spalpeen o' the worrld? An' me at all the trubble an' expinse av yer rearin'—you to cry 'hooroosh' when yer own father got a sixer in quod. Be me conscience an' sleeve-buttons, but I'd be dooin' my duty but poorly by Father Brady an' the Tin Commandments if I didn't correct yez!'

So nobody could say that Cleg was not well brought up.

If, however, Cleg saw his father take the straight road for the Public, he knew that there was still a shot in the old man's locker, and that there were enough of the 'shiners for another booze,' as it was expressed classically in these parts. He betook himself to his own devices, therefore, till closing time; but about eleven o'clock he began to haunt the vicinity of Hare's, and to peep within whenever the door opened. On one occasion he opened the door himself, and nearly got his head broken with the pound weight that came towards it. They did not stand on ceremony with small boys in that beershop. They knocked them down, and then inquired their errand afterwards. The landlord came from Jedburgh.

When his father came out of the Public, Cleg saw him home in original fashion. He had a curiously-shaped stick which he employed on these occasions. It was the fork of a tree that he had got from a very kind builder of the neighbourhood whose name was Younger. This stick was only produced at such times, and the police of the district, men with children of their own, and a kindly blind eye towards Cleg's ploys (when not too outrageous), did not interfere with his manifestations of filial piety. Indeed, it was none such a pleasant job to take Tim Kelly to the lock-up, even with 'The Twist' on him, and Cleg harassing the official rear with his crooked stick. So they generally let the father and son alone, though every now and then some energetic young man, new to the district, interfered. He did it just once.

Having seen his father safely into Hare's, Cleg went down the Pleasance with a skip and a jump to light his fire. He found another boy haling off his soap-box. Cleg threw a 'paver' to halt him, much as a privateer throws a shot athwart the bows of a prize as a signal to slacken speed. The boy turned instantly, but seeing Cleg coming with the swiftness of the wind, and his conscience telling him that he could make good no claim to the soap-box; knowing, moreover, that Cleg Kelly could 'lick him into shivereens,' he abandoned his prize and took to his heels, pausing at a safe distance to bandy epithets and information as to ancestors with

Cleg. But Cleg marched off without a word, which annoyed the other boy much more than the loss of the box. That was the fortune of war, but what would happen if Cleg Kelly took to getting proud? He stood a moment in thought. A light broke on him. Cleg had a pair of boots with a shine on them. He had it. That was the reason of this aristocratic reserve.

The lads who came to the class first that night were few and evil. The bulk of the better boys were working in shoe factories in the suburbs, and could not get there at seven. That was a full hour too early for them, and the lads who arrived were there simply 'on for a lark.' But they did not know Miss Cecilia Tennant, and they had reckoned without Mr. C. Kelly, who had resolved that he would be hawk to their larks. The half-dozen louts sat lowering and leering in the neat and clean storeroom in which the Very Young Partner, Mr. Donald Iverach, had arranged with his own hand a chair, a table, and a good many forms, which he had been at the expense of sending the porter to buy from the founder of a bankrupt sect who lately had had a meetinghouse left on his hands. The Very Youngest was prepared to say that he had 'found' these lying about the premises, had he been questioned about the matter. And so he had, but the porter had put them there first. But Celie Tennant took what the gods had sent her, and asked no questions; though, not being simpler than other young women of her determination of character, she had her own ideas as to where they came from. Celie asked the company to stand up as she entered, which with some nudging and shuffling they did, whereupon she astounded them by shaking hands with them. This set them rather on their beam-ends for a moment, and they did not recover any power for mischief till Celie asked them to close their eyes during prayer. Standing up at her desk, she folded her little hands and closed her own eyes to ask the God whom she tried to serve (surely a different God from the one whom the tract-scattering woman worshipped) to aid her and help the lads. Cleg Kelly watched her with adoring eyes. He had heard of the angels. She had often told him about them, but he privately backed his

teacher against the best of them. When Celie opened her eyes no one was visible save Cleg, who stood with his eyes aflame. The class had vanished.

'The dirty bliggards,' said Cleg, the tongue of his father coming back to him in his excitement; 'I'll bring them up to the scratch by the scruff av their impident necks!'

So he darted underneath the forms, and shortly reappeared with a couple of much bigger boys clinging on to him, and belabouring him with all their might. Wrestling himself clear for a moment, Cleg dashed up the green blind which covered the small single-pane window in the gable, and turned to bay. The two whom he had brought up from the depths made a dash at him as he passed, overturned the teacher's table in their eagerness to prevent him from getting to the door; but it was not the door that Cleg wanted to reach. It was his crook, which he had cunningly hitched to the back of the teacher's chair. With that he turned valiantly to bay, making the table a kind of fortification.

'Sit down, Miss,' he said, reassuringly; 'I'll do for them, shure.'

At this moment the outer door opened, and his friend, the night-watchman, arrived armed with a formidable stick, the sight of which, and the knowledge that they were trapped, took all the tucker out of these very cowardly young men. It was only a bit of fun, Cleg! they whined.

'Get out av this!' shouted Cleg, dancing in his fury; and cut of this they got, the watchman's stick doing its bit as they passed, and his dog hanging determinedly on to their ankles.

What surprised them most was a sudden and unexpected hoist they each received, apparently from the door of the yard, which deposited them on the street with their systems considerably jarred. The Very Junior Partner smiled thoughtfully as he rubbed his toe. For the first time in his life he wished that he had worn boots both larger and heavier. 'But 'twill suffice, 'twill serve!' he quoted, as he turned away into his office; for, by a strange coincidence, he was working late that night. The Senior Partner knew that he had given up an

engagement to go to a dance that evening in order to work up some business that had been lying over. He rubbed his hands delightedly.

'Donald is taking to the business at last,' he told his wife as they prepared for bed.

Celie had taken no part in this scene, but she was far too energetic and fearless a young woman to remain long quiescent. She went round the benches, and as she came in sight of each grovelling lout she ordered him to get up, and, abashed and cowed, they rose one by one to their feet. The dust of the floor had made no apparent change in their original disarray. They stood grinning helplessly and inanely, like yokels before a show at a country fair; but there was no heart in their affectation of mirth. The discomfiture of their comrades, and the sound of the watchman's oak 'rung' had been too much for them. Then, for five lively minutes, Miss Cecilia's tongue played like lambent lightning about their ears, and they visibly wilted before her.

It was now eight o'clock, and the genuine members of the class began to put in an appearance, and each of them was welcomed with the most friendly of greetings from the teacher: and as each passed, Cleg's left eyelid drooped suddenly upon his cheek, so decorously that no one could call it a wink. The four malcontents moved for the door, but the clear voice of Miss Tennant brought them to a stand.

'Sit down, all of you, and speak to me at the close of the class.'

So they sat down, being well aware that they had not a sympathiser in the room. It had been their intention to 'raise a dust' before the arrival of the factory brigade, and then to get clear off; and, barring Cleg Kelly, they would have done it. Cleg did not yet go to the factory, for the manager would not believe that he was thirteen, though Cleg had told him so times without number; he had even on one occasion stretched a point and as vainly tried fourteen. Cleg Kelly went to school ever since he became a reformed character; but not every day, so as to prevent the teacher from becoming too conceited. However, he looked in occasionally when he had nothing better to do. If he

happened to be cold when he entered, in about half an hour he was quite warm.

What Celie Tennant said to these four louts will never be known—they have never told; but it is sufficient to say that they became pillars of the 'Sooth Back' Mission and Night School, and needed no more attention than any of the others.

The Very Junior Partner and Cleg Kelly both saw home the teacher that night, walking close together; though, of course, entirely ignoring each other, each some hundred yards behind Miss Tennant, who walked serene in the consciousness of lonely courage, her roll-book in one hand and her skirt daintily held in the other, walking with that charming side-swing which both her escorts thought adorable. They did not communicate this to each other. On the contrary, Cleg took a 'gob' of hard mud in his hand, and stood a moment in doubt, dividing the swift mind, whether or no to 'bust the swell's topper in.' But a consciousness of the excellence of that young man's intentions preserved the shiny crown which it had cost a shilling to have ironed that morning at the Shop-up-three-Steps at the corner of the North Bridge. The Very Junior liked to go spruce to business.

On his return to the yard, Cleg Kelly found that his day's work was not yet done. One of his special chums came to tell him that 'Hole i' the Wa', the biggest of the louts first expelled, was thirsting for his blood, and had dared him to fight that very night. Now, had Cleg been more advanced in reformation, he would of course have refused, and given his voice for peace; but then, you see, he was only a beginner. He sent his friend to tell 'Hole i' the Wa' that he would wait for him in the 'Polissman's Yard.' This was a court at the back of a police station in the vicinity, which could only be entered by a low 'pend' or vaulted passage, though commanded from above by the high windows of the station-house. It had long been a great idea of Cleg's to have a battle royal under the very nose of the constituted authority of the city.

Thither he resorted, and in a little a crowd of his friends and his foes followed him, all protesting that he

could not mean to fight fair so near to the 'bobbies' abode. But Cleg unfolded his scheme, which instantly placed him on the giddy apex of popularity. He got them to roll a heavy barrel which stood in one corner of the yard into the 'pend,' which it almost completely blocked up, and he himself fixed it in position with some of the great iron curved shods which the lorry-men used to stop their coal waggons on the steep streets of the south-side. It stood so firm that nothing short of dynamite could have shifted it.

The fight proceeded, but into its details we need not enter. It was truly Homeric. Cleg flitted here and there like the active insect from which he got his name, and stung wherever he could get an opening. The shouts of the spectators might have been heard in that still place for the better part of a mile, and in a few minutes all the police who were on duty were thundering on the barrel, and all those who had been in bed manned the windows in dishabille, and threatened the combatants and spectators by name.

Cleg Kelly, dancing ever more wildly round his adversary, revolving his fists like the spokes of a bicycle, shouted defiance.

'Come on, Hole,' he cried, 'ye're no' worth a buckie at fechtin!' and as he circled near the 'pend,' and heard the heavens of the labouring officers of justice, he called out: 'You, Langshanks, cast yer coat an' crawl through the bung; ye nicht ken that the sergeant's ower fat. Hae ye nae sense?'

There was laughter aloft in the station windows. But somebody at the outside had brought a sledge hammer, and at the first blow the barrel resolved itself into its component staves, and the police tumbled in, falling headlong over Cleg's waggon clamps.

Then there was a wild scurry of the lads up the piles of casks and rubbish at the back of the yard, and over the outhouses and roofs. Cleg was not first in getting away, but he had studied the locality, and he had his plans cut and dried. He would have been ashamed to have been caught now that he was on his way to be a reformed character. In half an hour he was waiting with crooked stick to 'boost' his father home

when he was duly cast out of Hare's Public at the stroke of eleven as the completed produce of that establishment.

So in due time, and with many hard words from Timothy, they neared the den which they called home. At the foot of the long stair Timothy Kelly lay down with the grunt of a hog, and refused to move or speak. He would arise for no punchings, however artistic, with the knobbiest portions of the stick, and Cleg paused, for the first time that day, almost in despair. A policeman came round the corner, flashing the light of his bull's-eye right and left. Cleg's heart stood still. It was the lengthy officer whom he had called 'Langshanks,' and invited to come through the bung. He feared that he was too kenspeckle to escape. He went over to him, and taking a tug at his hair, which meant manners, said:

'Please, officer, will ye gie me a lift up the stair wi' my faither?'

The policeman whistled a long, low whistle, and laughed.

'Officer!' says he, 'Officer! Be the powers, 'twas 'Langshanks' ye called me the last time, ye thief o' the wurrl'd!' said the man, who was of national kin to Cleg.

So they twain helped their compatriot unsteadily to his den at the head of the stairs.

'Ye're the cheekiest young shaver I ivver saw,' said Longshanks, admiringly, as he turned away; 'but there's some good in yez!'

Cleg Kelly locked the door on the outside, said his prayers like the reformed character that he was, and laid him down on the mat to sleep the sleep of the just. The Junior Partner always saw Miss Tennant home after this. He calls her 'Celie' now. She has been meaning to tell him for the last month that he must not do so any more.

18. ENSAMPLES TO THE FLOCK

The family of the late Tyke M'Lurg consisted of three loons and a lassie. Tyke had never done anything for his children except share with a short-lived and shadowy mother the responsibility of bringing them into the world. The time that he could spare from his profession of poacher, he had systematically devoted to neglecting them. Tyke had solved successfully for many years the problem of how to live by the least possible expenditure of labour. Kind ladies had taken him in hand time and again. They had provided clothes for his children, which Tyke had primarily converted into coin of the realm, and indirectly into liquid refreshment, at Lucky Morgan's rag store in Cairn Edward. Work had been found for Tyke, and he had done many half days of labour in various gardens. Unfortunately, however, before the hour of noon, it was Tyke's hard case to be taken with a 'groom in his inside' of such a nature that he became rapidly incapacitated for further work.

'No, mem, I canna tak' it. It's mony a year since I saw the evil o't. Ye'll hae to excuse me, but I really couldna. Oh, thae pains! O sirce, my inside! Weel, gin ye insist, I'll juist hae to try a toothfu' to obleege ye, like.'

But Tyke's toothfu's were over for this world, and his shortcomings were lying under four feet of red mould. Half a dozen kindly folk who pitied his 'three loons and a lassie' gathered a few pounds and gave him a decent burial, not for his own sake, but in order that the four little scarecrows might have a decent start in life. It is the most fatal and indestructible of reproaches in the south of Scotland to have a father buried by the parish.

The lassie was the eldest of the children. She was thirteen, and she hardly remembered what it was to have a mother or a new frock. But ever since she was eleven she had never had a dirty one. The smith's wife had shown her how to wash, and she had learned from the teacher how to mend. 'Leeb' had appeared on the books of the school as Elizabeth M'Lurg, and she had attended as often as she could—that is, as often as her

father could not prevent her; for Tyke, being an independent man, was down on the compulsory clause of the Education Act, and had more than once got thirty days for assaulting the School Board officer.

When he found out that Leeb was attending school at the village, he lay in wait for her on her return, with a stick, and after administering chastisement on general principles, he went on to specify his daughter's iniquities:

'Ye upsettin' blastie, wad ye be for gangin' to their schule, learnin' to look doon on yer ain faither that has been at sic pains to rear ye'—a pause for further correction, to which poor Leeb vocalised an accompaniment. 'Let me see gin ye can read! Mac, read that!' he said, flinging a tattered lesson book, which the teacher had given her, to his daughter. Leeb opened the book, and, punctuating the lesson with her sobs, she read in the high and level shriek of a locomotive engine, 'And so brave Bobby, having saved the tr-r-r-em-bling child, re-turn-ed with the res-cu-ed one in his mouth to the shore.'

'Davert! but ye can read!' said her father, snatching the book and tearing it up before her eyes. 'Noo, listen; I'll hae nane o' my bairns teachd to despise their faither by no Schule Boards. Look you here, Leeb M'Lurg, gin ever I catch you within a mile o' the schule, I'll skin ye!'

But for all this tremendous threat, or maybe all the more because of it, and also because she so much desired to be able to do a white seam, Leeb so arranged it that there were few days when she did not manage to come along the mile and half of lochside road which separated her from the little one-roomed, whitewashed school-house on the face of the brae. She even brought one of the 'loons' with her pretty often; but as Jock, Rab, and Benny (otherwise known as Rag, Tag, and Bobtail) got a little older, they more easily accommodated themselves to the wishes of their parent; and, in spite of Leeb's blandishments, they went into 'hidie holes' till the School Board officer had passed by.

M'Lurg's Mill, where the children lived, was a tumbledown erection, beautiful for situation, set on the

side of the long loch of Kenick. The house had once been a little farmhouse, its windows brilliant with geraniums and verbenas; but in the latter days of the forlorn M'Lurgs it had become betrampled as to its doorsteps by lean swine, and bespattered as to its broken floor by intrusive hens. It was to M'Lurg's Mill that the children returned after the funeral. Leeb had been arrayed in the hat and dress of a neighbour's daughter for the occasion, but the three loons had played 'tig' in the intervals of watching their father's funeral from the broomy knoll behind the mill. Jock, the eldest, was nearly eleven, and had been taken in hand by the kind neighbour wife at the same time as Leeb. At one time he looked as though he would even better repay attention, for he feigned a sleek-faced submission and a ready compliance which put Mistress Auld of the Arkland off her guard. Then as soon as his sister, of whom Jock stood most in awe, was gone out, he snatched up his ragged clothes and fled to the hill. Here he was immediately joined by the other two loons. They caught the Arkland donkey grazing in the field beside the mill dam, and having made a parcel of the good black trousers and jacket, they tied them to the donkey and drove him homeward with blows and shoutings. A funeral was only a dull procession to them, and the fact that it was their father's made no difference.

Next morning Leeb sat down on the 'stoop' or wooden bench by the door, and proceeded to cast up her position. Her assets were not difficult to reckon. A house of two rooms, one devoted to hens and lumber; a mill which had once sawn good timber, but whose great circular saw had stood still for many months; a mill-lade broken down in several places, three or four chairs and a stool, a tabic, and a wash-tub. When she got so far she paused. It was evident that there could be no more school for her, and the thought struck her that now she must take the responsibility for the boys, and bring them up to be useful and diligent. She did not and could not so express her resolve to herself, but a still and strong determination was in her sore little heart not to let the boys grow up like their father.

Leeb had gone to Sabbath school every week, when she could escape from the tyranny of home, and was, therefore, well known to the minister, who had often exercised himself in vain on the thick defensive armour of ignorance and stupidity which encompassed the elder M'Lurg. His office-bearers and he had often bemoaned the sad example of this ne'er-do-weel family which had entrenched itself in the midst of so many well-doing people. M'Lurg's Mill was a reproach and an eyesore to the whole parish, and the M'Lurg 'weans' a gratuitous insult to every self-respecting mother within miles. For three miles round the children were forbidden to play with, or even to speak to, the four outcasts at the mill. Consequently their society was much sought after.

When Leeb came to set forth her resources, she could not think of any except the four-pound loaf, the dozen hens and a cock, the routing wild Indian of a pig, and the two lean and knobby cows on the hill at the back. It would have been possible to have sold all these things, perhaps, but Leeb looked upon herself as trustee for the rest of the family. She resolved, therefore, to make what use of them she could, and having most of the property under her eye at the time, there was the less need to indite an inventory of it.

But, first, she must bring her brothers to a sense of their position. She was a very Napoleon of thirteen, and she knew that now that there was no counter-authority to her own, she could bring Jock, Rob, and Benny to their senses very quickly. She therefore selected with some care and attention a hazel stick, using a broken table-knife to cut it with a great deal of deftness. Having trimmed it, she went out to the hill to look for her brothers. It was not long before she came upon them engaged in the fascinating amusement of rooting for pignuts in a green bankside. The natural Leeb would instantly have thrown down her wand of office and joined them in the search, but the Leeb of today was a very different person. Her second thought was to rush among them and deal lusty blows with the stick, but she fortunately remembered that in that case they would scatter, and that by force she could only

take home one or at most two. She therefore called to her assistance the natural guile of her sex.

'Boys, are ye hungry?' she said. 'There's sic a graun' big loaf come frae the Arkland!' By this time all her audience were on their feet. 'An' I'll milk the kye, an' we'll hae a feast.'

'Come on, Jock,' said Rab, the second loon, and the leader in mischief, 'I'll race ye for the loaf.'

'Ye needna do that,' said Leeb, calmly; 'the door's lock it.'

So as Leeb went along she talked to her brothers as soberly as though they were models of good behaviour and all the virtues, telling them what she was going to do, and how she would expect them to help her. By the time she got them into the mill yard, she had succeeded in stirring their enthusiasm, especially that of Jock, to whom with a natural tact she gave the wand of the office of 'sairgint,' a rank which, on the authority of Sergeant M'Millan, the village pensioner, was understood to be very much higher than that of general. 'Sairgint' Jock foresaw much future interest in the disciplining of his brothers, and entered with eagerness into the new ploy. The out-of-doors live stock was also committed to his care. He was to drive the cows along the roadside and allow them to pasture on the sweetest and most succulent grasses, while Rab scouted in the direction of the village for supposititious 'poalismen' who were understood to take up and sell for the Queen's benefit all cows found eating grass on the public highway. Immediately after Jock and Rab had received a hunch of the Arkland loaf and their covenanted drink of milk, they went off to drive the cows to the loch road, so that they might at once begin to fill up their lean sides. Benny, the youngest, who was eight past, she reserved for her own assistant. He was a somewhat tearful but willing little fellow, whose voice haunted the precincts of M'Lurg's mill like a wistful ghost. His brothers were constantly running away from him, and he pattering after them as fast as his fat little legs could carry him, roaring with open mouth at their cruelty, the tears making clean watercourses down his grimy cheeks. But Benny soon became a new boy under

his sister's exclusive care.

'Noo, Benny,' she said, 'you an' me's gaun to clean the hoose. Jock an' Rab will no' be kennin' it when they come back!' So, having filled the tub with water from the mill-lade, and carried every movable article of furniture outside, Leeb began to wash out the house and rid it of the accumulated dirt of years. Benny carried small bucketfuls of water to swill over the floor. Gradually the true colour of the stones began to shine up, and the black incrustation to retreat towards the outlying corners.

'I'm gaun doon to the village,' she said abruptly. 'Benny, you keep scrubbin' along the wa's.'

Leeb took her way down rapidly to where Joe Turner, the village mason, was standing by a newly begun pig-stye or swine-ree, stirring a heap of lime and sand.

'G'ye way oot o' that!' he said instantly, with the threatening gesture which every villager except the minister and the mistress of Arkland instinctively made on seeing a M'Lurg. This it is to have a bad name.

But Leeb stood her ground, strong in the consciousness of her good intentions.

'Maister Turner,' she said, 'could ye let me hae a bucketfu' or twa o' whitewash for the mill kitchen, an' I'll pay ye in hen's eggs. Oor hens are layin' fine, an' your mistress is fond o' an egg in the mornin'.'

Joe stopped and scratched his head. This was something new, even in a village where a good deal of business is done according to the rules of truck or barter.

'What are ye gaun to do wi' the whitewash?' he inquired, to get time to think. 'There was little whitewash in use about M'Lurg's Mill in yer faither's time!'

'But I'm gaun to bring up the boys as they should,' said Leeb, with some natural importance, sketching triangles on the ground with her bare toe.

'An' what's whitewash got to do wi' that?' asked Joe, with some asperity.

Leeb could not just put the matter into words, but she instinctively felt that it had a good deal to do with

it. Whitewash was her badge of respectability both inside the house and out, in which Leeb was at one with modern science.

'I'll gie three dizzen o' eggs for three bucketfu's,' she said.

'An' hoo div I ken that I'll ever see ane o' the eggs?' asked Joe.

'I've brocht a dizzen wi' me noo!' said Leeb, promptly producing them from under her apron.

Leeb got the whitewash that very night and the loan of a brush to put it on with. Next morning the farmer of the Crae received a shock. There was something large and white down on the lochside, where ever since he came to the Crae he had seen nothing but the trees which hid M'Lurg's mill.

'I misdoot it's gaun to be terrible weather. I never saw that hoose o' Tyke M'Lurg's aff our hill afore!' he said.

The minister came by that day and stood perfectly aghast at the new splendours of the M'Lurg mansion. Hitherto when he had strangers staying with him, he took them another way, in order that his parish might not be disgraced. Not only were the walls of the house shining with whitewash, but the windows were cleaned, a piece of white muslin curtain was pinned across each, and a jug with a bunch of heather and wild flowers looked out smiling on the passers-by. The minister bent his steps to the open door. He could see the two M'Lurg cows pasturing placidly with much contented head-tossing on the roadside, while a small boy sat above labouring at the first rounds of a stocking. From the house came the shrill voice of singing. Out of the fir-wood over the knoll came a still smaller boy bent double with a load of sticks.

In the window, written with large sprawling capitals on a leaf of a copy-book under the heading 'Encourage Earnest Endeavour,' appeared the striking legend:

SOWING & MENDING DUN GOOD COWS MILK
STICKS FOR FIREWOOD CHEEP MAY LAID EGGS
BY ELIZABETH MCLURG

The minister stood regarding, amazement on

every line of his face. Leeb came out singing, a neatly tied bundle; of chips made out of the dry debris of the sawmill in her hand.

'Elizabeth,' said he, 'what is the meaning of this?'

'Will ye be pleased to step ben?' said Leeb. The minister did so, and was astonished to find himself sitting down in a spotless kitchen, the walls positively painfully white, the wooden chairs scoured with sand till the very fibre of the wood was blanched, and on a floor, so clean that one might have dined off it, the mystic whorls and crosses of whiting which connect all good Galloway housekeepers with Runic times.

Before the minister went out of M'Lurg's Mill he had learned the intentions of Leeb to make men of her brothers. He said:

'You are a woman already, before your time, Elizabeth!' which was the speech of all others best fitted to please Leeb M'Lurg. He also ordered milk and eggs for the manse to be delivered by Benny, and promised that his wife should call upon the little head of the house.

As he went down the road by the lochside he meditated, and this was the substance of his thought: 'If that girl brings up her brothers like herself, Tyke M'Lurg's children may yet be ensamples to the flock.'

But as to this we shall see.

19. THE SIEGE OF M'LURG'S MILL

Elizabeth M'Lurg had been over at the village for her groceries. Dressed in her best—clean pinafores, white sun-bonneted—she was a comely picture. Half a dozen years had made a difference in the coltish lassie who had dragooned her three loons of brothers into decency and school attendance after her father's funeral. There was now not a better-doing family in the parish than that over which the rule of Leeb M'Lurg had the unquestioned force of an autocracy. Leeb had saved enough from her cows and poultry to employ Sanny MacQuhatt, the travelling millwright, to put the old sawmill in order against that approaching day when John M'Lurg, her eldest brother, would be out of his time at the shop of Rob Johnstone, joiner and cartwright in Whunnyliggate. Affairs had marched well with the M'Lurges. Rob, the second, was still at school, but there was word of his getting into a Cairn Edward bank; and it was the desire of Leeb's life to see her favourite Benny turned into a dominie. She had already spoken to the minister about having him made a pupil-teacher at the next vacancy.

Elizabeth had a word for every one as she walked sedately up the narrow unpaved street—modest for the minister, shy for young Will Morton, the teacher of the village school where her brothers stood alternately at the head of the highest class in sharp fraternal emulation—no other pupil coming within a mile of them; straightforward with the women folk, who came to their doors to look down the street every ten minutes or so on the chance of seeing a cadger, or even a red farm cart, whose clanking passage might break the soundless monotony.

The village lads would also cry, 'Hoo's a' wi' ye the day, Leeb?' in an offhand way which did not conceal from that sharp-eyed young woman their desire to stand well with her.

'She's the only lass i' the parish that kens hoo to lift her feet aff the grund,' said Saunders Paterson to Rab Affleck, as they watched Leeb's progress up the street.

'Ay, man, ye're richt; there's nae glaur'll stick to Leeb's coat-tail.'

But this morning many came to look after Leeb M'Lurg of M'Lurg's Mill who had hitherto paid small attention to her comings and goings. For it was the village talk that Timothy M'Lurg, Tyke M'Lurg's younger brother, otherwise known as 'Tim the Tairger,' had come back, and had been seen and heard in the skirts of the public-house declaring that he had come as trustee of his brother to take possession of M'Lurg's Mill, its cattle and sheep, house gear and bestial, and to administer the same for the behoof of the children of the departed. It was a noble ambition, and when declared among the choice company assembled at the 'public,' it elicited warm commendations there, for Timothy M'Lurg had always spent other people's money like a man.

But when the better spirits of the village heard of it, there were many who grieved for the children who had made so gallant a fight. So when Elizabeth M'Lurg went up the street that day, there was many a one who watched her with a wae heart. Yet it was not until David Clark, the village shopkeeper, had finished serving her with tea and sugar that he said to Leeb, in a friendly way:

'I hear ye've gotten your Uncle Timothy back.' Leeb whitened to the lips at that name of dread. She remembered the wild nights when Timothy brought his companions with him, and turned the little world of M'Lurg's Mill upside down.

'No,' she answered, determined not to show any emotion to the watchful eyes of David Clark, 'I didna ken.'

She spoke as though the news were some ordinary and unimportant gossip.

'Where has he come frae?' she asked. David Clark knew that he had come from a long sojourn in her Majesty's prisons, owing to the death of a keeper in one of Tim's poaching affrays. But David was not a man to commit himself unnecessarily when a well-paying customer was concerned.

'They were sayin' that he was up aboot the public,

an' that he cam' frae Cairn Edward in the bottom o' a coal cairt.'

Calmly Leeb settled her reckoning with the eggs and butter which she had brought, and received the balance in good Queen's silver. Calmly she took her sedate way down the street, no step discomposed or hurried. But in her heart there was a deadly tumult.

Her scheme of life, so carefully constructed and so sturdily worked for, came tumbling about her ears. She had no idea what her uncle's powers might be—whether he could take the mill or claim the cows. She only knew that he would certainly do all the ill he was capable of, and she thought of her fortress lying open and unguarded at her enemy's mercy, with only old Sanny MacQuhatt hammering and grumbling to himself over the reconstruction of the rickety sawmill. As soon as she was clear of the village Leeb took to her heels, and glinted light foot through the poplar avenues along the skirts of the bright June meadows, where the hemlock was not yet overtopped by the meadow-sweet, as in a week or two it would be.

She struck across the hill above the loch, which lay below her rippleless and azure as the blue of a jay's wing. The air from off the heather was warm and honey-scented. At the second stile, when she turned into her own hill pasture, some vague fear struck her heart. She dared not take the first look at the homestead which she had given her young life to make worthy of her vow to bring up her brothers as they should. As she set her foot on the lowest stone of the high, uncouth stile in the dry-stone dyke, something grunted heavily on the other side.

So bestially human and superfluously degraded was the noise that Leeb knew that it could not be produced by any of the 'lower' animals. Gathering her skirts about her for a spring, and turning up a supercilious nose, she peeped over the top stone of the dyke. Beneath her lay Tim M'Lurg, sleeping stertorously, with his head recumbent on the lowest step, by which she must descend. A swarm of flies buzzed and crawled over his face, unhealthily flushed through its prison sallowness by drink and the June

sun.

Leeb, whose tastes were dainty as those of any other lady, glanced at him with such extreme disfavour that her fear was for the time being swallowed up in disgust. She paused for half a dozen long moments, finally reached down an experimental toe, and with a sharp side push on the close-cropped head she undid the precarious balance of her relative, who collapsed flaccidly sideways on the heather like an upset bolster.

His niece sprang over his prostrate hulk, took two or three rapid steps, faced about, and gazed fixedly at him, to show that she was not in the least afraid. Then she walked slowly up the path to the crest of the hill, where she was out of sight of the stile; when, with heart beating wildly, her terror came upon her, and she ran as hard as she could towards M'Lurg's Mill, which lay peacefully among the trees at the foot of the hill.

As she came down the woodside she caught up the tough branch of a fir tree, and drove the two cows, now no longer lean and ill-favoured, and the young bull, to which Leeb had been looking to pay her rent that year, towards the byre. She sent Jock and his mother on with vicious blows till they were safely stabled in their stalls, with fresh bundles of clover grass before them. Then Leeb locked the byre door with a ponderous seldom-used key, and went down to the Mill to warn Sanny MacQuhatt.

'Ay, an' yer uncle's come hame,' muttered Sanny. 'That's no' sae guid; an ill yin him a' the days o' him. Tim the Tairger they ca' him — no' withoot raison. Ay, ay, an ill yin Tim.'

'You'll no' let him within the Mill, wull ye, Sanny?'

'Certes, he'll no' come here as long as I'm responsible for pittin' the auld ramshackle concern in order— mair fule me for takin' on the job. It's never worth it; guid for nocht but firewood.'

And Sanny grumbled away till his words were lost in the snuffling produced by repeated pinches of brown Taddy from his waistcoat pocket. Leeb stood patient by, knowing that at this juncture the word of Sanny MacQuhatt, ill-tempered old curmudgeon of a

millwright though he might be, was to her a tower of strength.

The cattle put under lock and key, the Mill garrisoned, Leeb proceeded to the house, where she carefully locked every door and put the hasp on every window. Those which had no defence of this kind she secured with nails. While she was still employed about this last operation there came a loud knock at the front door, which Leeb had secured first of all.

'Wha's there?' challenged the besieged, sharp and clear.

'Open the door, Leeb,' returned a thick voice, which Leeb knew instinctively to be that of her uncle. 'It's me come hame.'

'I ken naebody that's to come hame,' returned Leeb. 'Wha micht 'me' be?'

'D'ye no' mind yer Uncle Timothy?' said the thick voice outside, subsiding into a whine. 'Let me come ben, Leeb; I'm comed to look efter ye, an' to work for ye a.'

'Na,' said Leeb; 'I've worked for mysel' a' thae years that ye've been lyin' in the gaol, a disgrace to us, and I'm no' gaun to let ye scatter what I hae gathered, sae just e'en tak' yersel' aff to where ye cam' frae. This is nae hame o' yours.'

The wrath of the still half-tipsy man rose in a flash. His voice became an unsteady scream.

'Then tak' heed to yersel', Leeb M'Lurg!' he shouted through the keyhole. 'Gin ye dinna let me in I'll burn the riggin' ower yer heid—the Mill first and then the hoose—ye ill-set, ungratefu' besom!'

'Ay, Uncle Timothy, ye can try either o' the twa,' said Leeb, from the safe vantage of a little staircase window, which, made of a single pane, opened inwards. 'Gae ava' frae my door this minute,' she said.

The gaol-bird beneath threw himself furiously against the old wooden door, which opened in the middle; but the oak bolt was firm, and held. Still, the whole house shook with the shock of his onslaught.

Leeb hesitated no longer, but snatched a black 'goblet' from the side of the kitchen fire, and sent the contents out of the window with a deft hand. There was

an answering howl of pain.

'Ye've scadded me! I'll hae the law on ye, ye randy! I'll hae yer life!'

'There's a potfu' mair on the fire for ye, gin ye dinna gang awa' quaitly wi' what ye hae gotten!' said Tim M'Lurg's hard-hearted niece.

He now took himself off in the direction of the barn. Hardly had he disappeared on the other side when Leeb's favourite brother, Benny, came whistling round the corner opposite to that at which Tim had disappeared. He stood astonished to see the front door shut. Leeb hurried down, unlocked the door, and called to him to run. He came slowly towards her with a bewildered countenance. She pulled him inside, told him hurriedly what had happened, and sent him off through the back window, which abutted on the moor, with a message to Will Morton, the schoolmaster. Benny flew like the wind. He knew that it was his part to bring up reinforcements while his sister kept the castle. Leeb watched till Benny was safe over the hill, then she herself slipped out of the house, locking the door behind her, and went towards the Mill, from which rose the sound of angry voices. Before she got there, however, the commotion was evidently reaching its climax, and Leeb deemed it best to slip into the byre, through one of the wickets of which she could see the Mill door. Through that wide-open square tumbled Tim the Tairger, bareheaded and in disarray, and behind him appeared the burly figure of old Sanny MacQuhatt, with his millwrighting mallet in his hand.

'I wad be wae to strike the like o' you, Tim,' said the old man. 'Ye michtna need anither, but dinna ye come back here to interfere wi' my wark. Gang awa' an' colloque wi' yer cronies, poachers an' sic-like, an' lea' decent folk abee!'

Timothy gathered himself up. He had had enough of the millwright, who, having done his part, went staidly back to his interrupted work. The ill-treated one came towards the byre, and, seeing the door open, he went in. Leeb sprang into the bauks above the stall of the bull just in time. Her uncle looked the cattle over with a dissatisfied eye. He seemed to Leeb to be

reckoning how much Crummie and Specklie would bring in the auction mart. She resolved that he should also have a look at Jock, and so be able to decide on his market value as well. Stooping over, she undid his binding, and lashed him at the same time sharply across the nose with the rope. Jock lowered his head, and backed indignantly out of his stall. As he turned he found himself face to face with an intruder, a man whose red neckcloth proved him evidently his enemy and assailant. Jock's charge was instant and effective. With a snort he cleared the byre, and pursued across the open square of the yard, tail in air and horns to the ground. Timothy M'Lurg could not complain of the warmth of his reception in the home of his ancestors.

He sought refuge from the bull in the big water hole under the mill-wheel. Here, waiting the bull's retirement, Leeb interviewed him from the Mill window, under the protection of Sanny MacQuhatt, and offered him a pound note to go away. This compromise had the weakness of a woman's compunction, and was strongly disapproved of by her ally.

'Gie that craitur a poun' to drink—he'll sune come back on ye for anither,' said Sanny, who knew the breed. 'I wad 'pound' him,' he muttered.

But Tim the Tairger, also thinking that this offer gave signs of yielding, rejected it with oaths and contumely. On the contrary, he would sell them up, bag and baggage. The whole place belonged to him. He had deeds that could prove it. Stock, plenishing, water-power—all were his.

'Gin the water-poo'er be yours, ma man,' said Sanny, 'ye can hae that, an' welcome.'

Sanny's humour was of the entirely practical kind.

He went to the mill-lade, and turned on the stream. The whole force of M'Lurg's mill-dam took its way smoothly down the repaired lade, and flashed with a solid leap over the old green wheel upon Timothy, as he stood between the bull to landward and the plunging mill-wheel. Sanny grimly kept up his end of the jest.

'Hae, ma man, ye'll no' say that we keepit ye oot o' yer richts. 'Water-poo'er,' quo he; 'nae pound notes

ye'se get i' this pairish, but it'll no' be Sanny MacQuhatt that'll keep ye oot o' the use o' yer ain water-poo'er.'

Tim the Tairger was in a woeful case. The old man looked from the Mill window, and comforted him with crusty humour, the points of which were all too obvious. The cold water plunged upon him from the mill-wheel, it deepened about his knees, and Jock, the young bull, pawed the ground and snorted murderously for his blood. He was completely sobered now, and vowed repeatedly that if they would only give him the pound note he would go and never disturb them more.

But Sanny had taken things into his own hands, and would not allow Leeb to interfere.

'Bide ye where ye are, ma man; ye're braw and caller doon there. Ye were aye a drouthy lad, Tim, since ever I kenned ye. Ye're in the way o' being slockened noo! An' in a wee there'll be a bonny lad wi' silver buttons comin' up that road to look for ye. Benny, yer ain bluid relative, he's gane for him, an' he'll hae him here the noo. It was a blessin' he was in the daistrict anyway; it's no that often a polisman's where he's wantit.'

'Here he comes,' cried Leeb, from her post of observation in the Mill gable.

Tim the Tairger took one look down the road, a single link of which he could see as it wound round the loch. He saw the sun glitter on the white buttons of a policeman's coat, who came stalking majestically along. Whatever evil Tim had on his conscience of prison-breaking or ticket-of-leave unreported we do not know, but the terror of the officer of the law overpowered even his fear of Jock's horns. With a wild skelloch of desperation he dashed out of the pool, and took down the road, doubling from the bull like a hunted hare.

The schoolmaster—masquerading, according to Leeb's orders, in Sergeant Macmillan's old policeman's coat—saw Timothy M'Lurg leap the low loaning dyke and tear down the road. After him thundered the bull, routing in blood-curdling wrath. From a high knoll he watched the chase, till hunter and hunted were lost in the shades of Knockangry Wood. The bull was found next day wandering near Dalry, with a clouted deer-

stalking cap transfixed on one horn; but as for Tim the Tairger, he was never more heard tell of in Stewartry or in Shire.

The mystery is not likely to be solved now, for the secrets of that chase are only known to Jock, and he ran his earthly race to the beef-tub half a dozen years ago without unburdening his conscience to any. From his uncertain temper it is, however, suspected that he had something on his mind.

As for Sanny MacQuhatt, he says that he is 'muckle feared that Tim the Tairger is gane whaur he wad be michty gled o' the water-poo'er o' M'Lurg's mill-lade— whilk,' concludes Sanny, 'I defy him to say that I ever denied him.'

20. THE MINISTER OF SCAUR CASTS OUT WITH HIS MAKER

Silas Cartwright had a quarrel with the Almighty. He had dwelt five years by the side of the Scaur Water. He was a lonely man and little given to going into company. The men of his presbytery found it hard to draw him away from his manse even for a night. He asked none of them to assist him at his Communion seasons except Mr. Ure of Crawwheats and Mr. Croft of the Riggs, both of whom could go back to their manses the same night. The manse of the Scaur sat on a high bank overlooking the long, narrow, densely-wooded valley. From his study window the minister could look over the clustered slate roofs of the village of Scaur into the pale-blue misty distance, through which a silver thread ran—Silas Cartwright's glimpse of that other world where the Nith glimmered among its rich wheat-fields. Above the manse of Scaur the woods died out into fringing hazel and birch, and the brown moorland began where the whaups and the peewits made a blithe crying on the June mornings, and the jacksnipe swooped sidelong with melancholy wing-quaverings every autumn evening.

It was to the bare hills of heather that Silas Cartwright took his way every time that he undid the hasp of the creaking front door of the manse which was so seldom used. He dwelt among his hill folk like a man of another blood and another speech. City bred and delicately nurtured, he had come to the parish of Scaur in the last days of patronage, through the interest of a university friend who happened to be the penniless laird of a barren heritage of bog and morass.

'You tak' the lairdship, an' I'll tak' the steepend!' his friend had said.

But Silas Cartwright had stuck to the manse. He had a great desire in his heart to be a leader among men, and the chance which opened to him among the shepherds and small sheep farmers of the Scaur Water was peculiarly fascinating. Likewise there was a girl with a pale check and shining gold hair for whom the minister dreamed of making a home. He had met

Cecilia Barton in Edinburgh drawing-rooms, where her pale beauty and crown of glistening tresses had lain heavy on his heart for many days after. Then they had met again by the side of the Eastern sea, where the rocky islands stood out in the morning like dusky amethysts against the sun. He had paced the sands with her, towering her slim form with his masculine stolidity. Cecilia Barton listened with a far-off sympathy while the tall student quoted Tennyson to her, and even thrilled with a faint emotion as the tones of his voice proclaimed more plainly than words that she, she only, was the power:

'Whose slightest whisper moved him more, Than all the ranged reasons of the world.'

This girl with the far-off eyes had trod, careless but not unconscious, on many hearts, and the virginal whiteness of her summer dress was more passionate than the heart which beat beneath it.

Silas Cartwright, as he walked on the moorland with his staff in his hand, thought often of the days when Tantallon's toothless portcullis was a gateway to the palace of delights, and when Fidra and the small isles swam on a sea of bliss. All this because there was a tolerant kindness in a girl's languid eyes, and because the glamour of a first love had fallen upon a young man. Then it was that Cecilia Barton had expressed her fondness for a life of pastoral quietness, simple among a simple people. This was her ideal, she said, her desire above all others. Her voice was soft; her eyes luminous. Her mother would have smiled had she heard her, but Cecilia Barton did not talk thus to her mother. Really her ideals lay in the region of C-sprung carriages and dressing-cases with fittings of monogrammed gold.

When Silas Cartwright went back to his city home that autumn, he treasured some words which in the silent coolness of a rocky recess this girl's voice had said to him. Indeed, they were more to him than the call of the Master whom he had promised to serve.

He took her hand in his, and she let it lie. He saw strange meanings in her eyes as they looked out to sea. Really she was only wondering what he would do next. Men do not act alike in such cases and the uncertainty

is pleasing. But Silas Cartwright, with small originality, only leaned towards the reflected light on the pale-gold hair.

'Do you love me?' he asked.

After a pause Cecilia Barton answered him, 'There is no man I love so well.'

Which was true and hopeful so far, and might have been sufficient had there not been a girl whom she loved infinitely more.

That last winter passed with presbyterial trials and class examinations to be overleaped, meaningless to him as so many hurdles in a handicap. License and ordination he passed like milestones which marked his progress towards the white-walled manse in a sunny glen which should be a home for a new Adam and Eve. Then came Adam Stennis and his offer of the manse of the Scaur. The young minister preached there to a scanty flock who accepted him with unconcern. The Cameronians were strong in that glen, and they looked on the new parish minister as an emblem of the powers of State which had refused to set up a Covenanted church. They came to the ordination, however, and sat silent with grim disapproval in every line of their faces. Then Silas Cartwright occupied himself in making a round of pastoral visitations, and in getting his furniture up from Thorniwood. He saw each article taken carefully off the carts; he unpacked it with his own hands, saying to himself, 'In this chair she will sit. At this table she will preside!' His Sabbaths were chiefly delightful to him because of the vision of shining pale-gold hair which glimmered, unseen by all save the minister, in the gloomy square prison of the manse seat. Here he would open the Sunday school. Here at the little school's lower end, beneath the windows round which the white roses clambered to peep in, the little cottage organ which he had bought for her would sit, and the thrill of her voice would shake the tendrils of the honeysuckle about the porch.

One day the carrier brought the minister of the Scaur a parcel, and on the same day the postman brought him a newspaper. The latter was marked with a blue cross, and announced that the marriage of

Perkins Dobbs and Cecilia Barton had been celebrated by the Rev. Dean Harkaway in the cathedral church of St. Kentigern. The bride had chosen the monograms and the C-springs. The country manse was a mere holiday opinion vanishing with Fidra and the grassy gateways of Tantallon. She whirled away amid smiles and rice, with the coat of arms of the paternal Dobbs (who in his day had brewed the best of ale) on the panels of her carriage, and there was an end of her.

But what of the manse that was furnished for her, the chairs which, as they were bought, packed, transported, and set up, were each consecrated to her down-sitting? What of the man whose every breath was a spasm of pain, to whom sleep came with a feeling of deadliest oppression, and who awoke in the morning to a sharp and cruel stound of agony?

Silas Cartwright walked on the moorland by night and day. He did not think. He did not speak. He did not murmur. He only looked for God's juniper bush, under which he might lie down and die.

But a man cannot die naturally when he will, and Silas Cartwright had stronger stuff in him than those have who take away their own lives.

The girl who had wronged him still lived with him a ghostly presence, and sat opposite him in the chairs which he had dreamed she would occupy.

He saw her in the graceful quiet of her white gown on the little green lawn under the apple trees. In his dreams he took her hand and climbed the mountains with her, taking her far up into the bosom of the moors, where the high Lead Hills fold themselves in overlapping purple masses about the Pass of Dalveen.

'This way madness lies!' he would say time and again to himself, when like a dash of cold rain the reality of his loss came upon him; but as his strange fancy strengthened, he walked with a ghostly bride and buried himself in an unreal present in order to shut out a hopeless future.

His pulpit work alternated between severely orthodox disquisitions quarried from the literature of the past, over which every minister has mining rights, and strange, dreamy rhapsodies which considerably

astonished his hearers in the little kirk of Scaur.

Silas Cartwright had never been a deeply spiritual man; but now, steeped in a kind of mystic make-believe, he reached out towards all sorts of spiritualism and occultism. He had catalogues of books on these subjects sent to him, and from these he made extensive purchases, far beyond what his means allowed. He steeped his mind in these studies, and it was not long before his work as pastor among the hill folk became distasteful to him. His congregation of a Sunday—droning psalms and fluttering leaves, sitting in straggling clusters about the pews, each looking more uncomfortable than his neighbour—moved before him like the idle painted shapes in a mummer's show. The only real figure in that gray kirk of rough harled masonry was the Presence with the shining hair sitting quiet on the cushions of the manse seat.

The parish of Scaur did not let its tongue lie still while all this was going on. It had its own opinion, which was, plainly, that the minister was going out of his mind. But he was all the less to be meddled with on that account. He had even an increase of his Sabbath congregations, for it was a fascinating subject to discuss the strange utterances of a mad minister at farm ingle nooks, and by the smithy fire during the week. The Cameronians took little heed. It was small concern of theirs if an Erastian went wrong in his mind. He was far from right to begin with. So their minister simply kept leathering on at the fundamentals. One of the things most noted was the care with which the minister of Scaur paraphrased the name of God in his prayers and discourses. The superstitious said that he dared not utter the Name. The bolder made bets that he would not do so in the whole course of a morning's diet of worship; and they won their wagers. It was, indeed, small wonder that the parish decided that its minister was going out of his mind.

But the seasons went round, and the most that any one could say when asked about Mr. Cartwright was that he was 'No' muckle waur than usual! He himself got little case or peace of mind, and it was impossible that he should, considering the purpose

which his mind confessed. This was no less than to take his revenge on God for denying him the desire of his heart. There was a kind of joy in the thought that he had cast out with his Maker.

What actually cured him it is strange to have to tell. When Cecilia Barton drove away that day behind the bays of Dobbs, she covenanted for a position and for riches. On the other hand, she had a husband whom she loved with such love that, when he died after five years, she put on widow's weeds of the best quality and was exceeding thankful. Then she came down to a shooting-lodge in the Nith valley, and sent for Silas Cartwright to come to see her. He resisted the summons for some days, for his ideal bride had grown to suffice him, and then finally he went. He saw and he returned—a sane man whose cure was complete. He had seen a fat woman with two fatter lap-dogs, who talked concerning horses and sneered at the people of the shepherds' houses about the mansion-house which she occupied.

So Silas Cartwright returned, clothed and in his right mind. There was no presence in the manse seat any more. He made his peace with God in ways that are not our business. His sermons were new things—instinct with fervour. Some of the hill folk went over to the parish church to hear him one night when he held an evening service. An old elder walked to the manse gate with the young man. They two stood a moment silent, and then the elder spoke.

'Maister Cartwright,' he said, 'you and your Maker had an' awfu' cast oot: but noo that ye've made it up, man, ye're maist fit to be a Cameronian!'

21. JOHN BLACK, CRITIC IN ORDINARY

John Black was not a minister, but there were few ministers that could hold a candle to him. This is a fact. John Black says so himself. He desires to add 'if any.' But owing to jealousy he has somehow never been appreciated. But if John Black were to speak his mind, he 'kens o' at least twal' ministers that had better resign.' Previous, however, to this holocaust we may endeavour to do some justice to John Black himself. He came to our Sunday school trip this year, and his sayings and doings for a long summer's day were within our observation. The result is appended hereunder, and may form a humble introduction to John's intended series of essays in destructive criticism.

First of all, John Black said that we were sure to get a bad day because we were going in the month of July. It is sure to rain in July. John had been a teacher in the school as long as he had a class, or, more accurately, as often as he could get his class to attend, for he used to disperse any class that was given to him in about three Sabbath days. The laddies said that 'they werena comin' there to hae their lugs dadded.' John said that 'he never saw sic a set o' young haythens'; and as for the superintendent, he said that 'he had something else to do than to rampage the country seeking for laddies to run away from John Black. If John wanted any more classes he could seek them himself.' John felt that this was a discouragement, and resigned his position as an acting teacher in our congregational Sabbath school. But he retained, entirely by his own appointment, a sort of honorary position as general critic to the management, and thought himself more indispensable than the entire staff. This was not, however, we believe, the universal opinion.

Last year we went up the country for our summer trip to a field on the farm of Greenshiels. John Black's auntie, who lived on the farm, had the supplying of the milk on that occasion, and, as everybody allowed, she just charged us two prices. John Black wanted us to go back to Greenshiels this year, but the minister had

made arrangements with one of his elders to visit his farm of Port More, on the shores of the Firth. John Black was much distressed at the thought of all the children falling off the rocky 'heughs' of Port More, and being brought home on a procession of shutters. Whereupon the minister said that in that case they had better take the shutters with them, for there were none within six miles of Port More. John told the minister that he would not have his responsibility for the best cow in the parish. But the minister thought he could take the responsibility without the cow. He is quite able for John Black at any time, is our minister.

We were going in carts, for the reason that if we did not go in carts we should have had to walk. Indeed many did walk; the younger teachers of both sexes in order to take the short cuts through the wood, and so save the horses—while many of the elder boys ranged on both sides of the road, like greyhounds fresh off the slip. The minister walked sedately behind all the carts along with the superintendent, seeing more than any one gave him credit for.

There was not much cheering when we started, for but few people were about, and it is no use hurraing if there is no one to hear you. The girls, for the most part, stayed quietly in their carts and sang hymns softly, with such of their teachers as, from age or other cause, had no call to rest the horses. There were some farmers' sons driving the carts, very nice lads, though shy as a rule till they found their tongues—which they did not do in general until they were within a mile of their own homes, and could see the smoke from their ancestral chimneys. Then they became unexpectedly voluble, and displayed astonishing local knowledge for the benefit of the lady teachers. James Greg even asked the Misses Robb, whose father keeps the shop at the Bridge End, if they would not like to come and live at his house. This was felt to be a very great length for James to go, but then James was known in all the parish to be a very daring Romeo. But Nancy Robb soon brought him to confusion by replying: 'We canna a' three come, Jamie; tell us what ane ye want, an' then we'll see about it!'

Nancy had been used to holding her own with the town lads, so James's rustic gallantry was child's play to her. Besides, she was going to be married in the back end, and so could speak more freely. No one is so dangerous as an engaged girl, not even a widow, though here the authorities are against us. The engaged girl is a licensed heart-breaker, certified capable, who knows that her time is short.

When we got to Port More we all went to have a look at the tide, which was just coming in. Some of the boys were only restrained by the most forcible arguments from bathing there and then. The water was about four inches deep half a mile from the shore; so, to make fun of them, the minister advised them to walk out with their clothes on, and strip when they got into deep water; but none of them did that.

We were just all seated in a great irregular semicircle, having milk and buns, when John Black drove up in his auntie's gig, which he had borrowed for the occasion. He had not been asked, but that did not prevent him from finding fault with all the arrangements as soon as he arrived. Milk, it appeared, was bad for the stomach when over-heated, and ought to have had its acidity corrected, according to his auntie's recipe, with a little water.

'We want nane of yer milk frae the coo wi' the iron tail, John,' said one of the teachers, who did not like John, and had said that he would not come if John was asked.

The children did not seem to feel any bad effects however, nor did they quarrel with the want of the corrective water, judging by the milk they stowed away about their persons. In a few minutes, after sundry cautions from the minister not to go along the shore without a teacher, they scattered into small roving bands. The cricket stumps were soon up, and a good game going. One of the teachers took the biggest boys to bathe in a sheltered cove at some distance, where the tide had come sufficiently far up. The lady teachers wandered about and picked rock rose and other seaside flowers, or explored with their classes the great shell heaps for 'rosebuds' and 'legs of mutton.' All was

peaceful and happy, and the minister was the happiest of all, for his sermons were both done, and lying snug within his Bible in the study of the manse. He talked to the superintendent at intervals, sucking meanwhile the ends of some sprays of honeysuckle. Then he crossed his legs, and told tales of how Rob Blair and he lived on ten shillings a week in their first session at college. The superintendent took mental notes for the benefit of his own boys, two of whom were going up to college this winter with quite other notions. All was peaceful—a bland happiness settled upon the chiefs looking down on the whole of their extensive family—a peace rudely disturbed by a 'cleg' which had inquiringly settled on the back of the minister's neck. It was a trying moment; but the minister was calm. He said, quietly:

'Will you be kind enough to kill me that 'cleg' on the back of my neck, Mr. Poison?'

The superintendent saw the insect apparently standing on its head, gorging itself with clerical blood, and realised that he had got a great man for his minister. John Black (who was not far away, explaining to three teachers and four of the elder scholars that the minister and superintendent were a couple of incapables) said when he went home that it was no wonder that the school was going to rack and ruin, for he 'saw wi' his ain een the superintendent and the minister fa'in' oot to that extent that the superintendent gied the minister a daud i' the side i' the heid!'

In the afternoon we made tea. The young men helped the ladies, while John Black kept off the children with a stick and also offered advice. The children made faces at him, and once when he went out of earshot of the group at the fire, Wattie Robb squared up at him, and dared him to 'come ahint the plantin'!' The minister smiled, looking at the bright print-clad girls and their willing assistants, for he thought that he would be a white silk handkerchief or two the richer before the winter. It is the correct thing for the bride to give the minister on the occasion of a wedding.

'It wad be mair wiselike,' said his housekeeper, Mary, 'if folk that gets marriet had enuch gumption to gie ye guid linen instead o' middlin' silk!'

The children were not a bit tired when they came to be mustered for the home-going, and life and limb were intact, in spite of John Black's prophecy. They would certainly have been the better of a wash, for some of them had apparently been trying to tunnel right through 'to the Aunty Pods,' as the farmer of Port More said. The superintendent knew of at least four boys with deceased rabbits up their trouser legs; but they were all the happier, and they made perfect bowers of the carts on the way home with green branches and flowers, cheering the long journey with song. They were a jovial company, and each one of them was as hoarse as a crow with shouting and hurrahing as they came in triumph through the town to dismount at the cross before the assembled townsfolk. The superintendent was a proud man that night seeing the end of his labours, and a kindly dew stood in the minister's eyes as he watched the red carts, crowded with happy young ones, pass him in review order. 'Of such,' he said, 'is the kingdom of heaven.'

But John Black's voice recalled him to himself as he drove by in his auntie's gig.

'There'll be an awfu' lot o' them no' weel the morn wi' a' that unta'endoon raw milk. Ye wad hae been better up at Greenshiels wi' my auntie!'

22. THE CANDID FRIEND

The lamp had long been lighted in the manse of Dule — that is, the lamp in the minister's study. The one belonging to the sitting-room was not yet brought in, for the mistress of the manse was teaching the bairns their evening lesson, and the murmur of her voice, broken into by the high treble of children's questions, came fitfully to the minister as he ploughed his way through Thirdly. He smiled as he heard the intermittent din, and once he moved as if to leave his work to itself and go into the other room; but a glance at the expanse of unfilled paper changed his purpose, and he proceeded with his dark spider tracks across the white sheet. Men who write chiefly for their own reading write badly—ministers worst of all. The wind was blowing a hurricane about the manse of Dule. The bare branches of the straggling poplars that bordered the walk whipped the window of the study, and the rain volleyed against the panes in single drops the size of shillings. The minister put a lump of coal on the fire, pausing a long time before he put it on, finally letting it drop with a bang as the uncertain joints of the spindle-legged tongs gave way diagonally. 'Tis a way that tongs have, and the minister seemed to feel it, for he said emphatically, 'No; that will not do!' But he was referring to Thirdly. So he lay back for a long time and cogitated an illustration. Then he took a book of reference down from the shelf, which proved so interesting that he continued to read long after he had passed the limit at which all information germane to his subject ceased. It was another way he had, and he excused the habit to himself by saying that doubtless in this way he gained a good deal of information.

Then to the window there came a roaring gust which bent the frame and thundered among the fir trees at the gable end as if it would have them all down before the morning. The minister hoped that there would be no poor outcast homeless on such a night, and as a sort of per contra he remembered that no one could possibly come to interrupt him this evening at least, and that he might even finish one sermon and get

well under weigh with the other.

At this moment he heard the squeak of the bell wire that told him that a visitor was at the outer door. Some Solomon of an architect or bell-hanger had made the bell wire pass through the study on its way to the kitchen, and so the minister was warned of the chance corner while his feet were yet on the threshold. The student under the lamp sighed, lay back in his chair, and waited. He almost prayed that it might merely be a message; but no—the sound of shuffling feet. It was somebody coming in.

There was a knock at the study door, and then the voice of the faithful Marget, saying:

'Maister Tammass Partan to see ye, sir.'

She said this with great distinctness, for the minister had once checked her for saying, 'Here's Tammass Partan!' which was what she longed to say to this day.

'How are you tonight, Thomas?' asked the minister. He tried hard to say, 'I'm glad to see you,' but could not manage it, for even a minister has a conscience. Mr. Partan's feet left two muddy marks side by side across the carpet. He made a conscience of stepping over two mats on his way in. This helped (among other things) to make him a popular visitor at the manse.

'Thank you, minister; I'm no' that unco weel.'

'Then are you sure that you should be out such a night?' said the minister, anxious for the welfare of his parishioner.

'But, as ye say yersel', Maister Girmory, 'When duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.'

The minister's heart sank within him, as a stone sinks in a deep lake, for he knew that the 'candid friend' had found him out once more—and that his tenderest mercies were cruel. But he kept a discreet and resigned silence. If the minister had a fault, said his friends, it was that he was too quiet.

'Weel, minister,' said Tammass Partan, 'I just cam' up my ways the nicht to see ye, and tell ye what the folk were sayin'. I wadna be a friend till ye gin I didna. Faithfu', ye ken, are the wounds of a friend!'

The minister looked at the fire. He was not a man inclined to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, and he knew that before Tammas Partan had done with his recital he would be too upset to continue with his Sabbath morning's sermon on 'The Fruits of the Spirit,' at least for that night. It was not the first time that Tammas had 'thocht it his duty' to come in at the critical moment and introduce some sand into the bearings. Had the minister been a stronger or a more emphatic man, he would have told his visitor that he did not want to hear his stories, or at least he would have so received them that they would not have been told a second time. But the minister of Dule was acutely sensitive to blame, and the pain of a cruel word or an intentional slight would keep him sleepless for nights. It is in such parishes as Dule that 'Tammas Partans' thrive. He had just tried it once with Mr. Girmory's predecessor, one of the grand old school of farmer clerics now almost extinct. Tammas Partan had once at a Fast Day service on the Thursday before the Sacrament Day, risen to his feet and said to old Mr. M'Gowl, who was standing among his elders ready for the distribution of tokens: 'Remember the young communicants!' Remember your own business!' returned Mr. M'Gowl, instantly, at the same time giving the officious interrupter a sounding 'cuff' on the side of the head.

After which Tammas, feeling that his occupation was gone, joined himself to the sect of the Apostolic Brethren, at that time making a stir in the neighbourhood, with whom he was just six weeks in communion till they arose in a body and cast him out of the synagogue. So he had been houseless and homeless spiritually till Mr. Girmory came, when Tammas, seeing him to be a man after his own heart, returned back gladly to his old nest.

'They are sayin' that there's no' eneuch life in yer sermons, minister— nae grup, so to speak, kind o' wambly an' cauldriife. Noo, that's no' a faut that I wad like to fin' mysel,' but that's what they're sayin', and I thoct it my duty to tell ye.'

'Also Gashmu saith it!' said the minister.

'What did ye say? Na, it wasna him; it was Rab Flint, the quarryman, and Andrew Banks of Carsewall, that said it—I dinna ken the party that ye name.'

'Ay,' said the minister.

'An' Lame Sandy, the soutar, thocht that there was an awesome lack o' speerituality in yer discoorse the Sabbath afore last. He asked, 'Hoo could ony minister look for a blessin' efter playin' a hale efternune at the Channel-stanes wi' a' the riff-raff o' the neebourhood?'

'Were ye not there yersel,' Thomas?' queried the minister, quietly, wondering how long this was going to last.

'Ou ay; I'm far frae denyin' it—but it's no' my ain opeenions I'm giein' till ye. I wadna presume to do that; but it's the talk o' the pairish. An' there's Gilbert Loan's auntie; she has been troubled wi' a kin' o' dwaminess in her inside for near three weeks, an' ye've gane by the door mair nor yince, an' never looked the road she was on, sac Gilbert an' a' his folk are thinkin' o' leavin' the kirk.'

'But I never heard of it till this minute!' protested the minister, touched at last on a tender spot. 'Why did they not send me word?'

'Weel, minister, Gilbert said to me that if ye had nae better ken o' yer fowk than no' to miss them three Sabbaths oot o' the back gallery, they werena gaun to bemean themsel's to sen' ye nae word.'

The minister could just see over the pulpit cushion as far as the bald spot on the precentor's head, but he said nothing.

At this point there was a diversion, for the minister's wife came in. She was not tall in stature, but to Tammas she loomed up now like a Jael among women. The minister rose to give her a seat, but she had not come to sit down.

'Now, I would have you understand once for all, Tammas Partan,' she began— ('Weel dune the mistress!' said Marget, low to herself, behind the door) — 'that we have had more than enough of this! I've heard every word ye've said to Mr. Girmory, for the door was left open,' ('I saw to that mysel', said Marget) 'and I want

you to carry no more parish clashes into my house.'

'Hush, hush! my dear; Tammas means well!' said the minister, deprecatingly.

But the belligerent little woman did not hear, or at any rate did not heed, for she continued addressing herself directly to Tammas, who sat on the low chair as if he had been dropped there unexpectedly from a great height.

'Take for granted,' she said, 'that whatever is for the minister's good to hear, that he'll hear without your assistance. And you can tell your friends, Rob Flint and Andrew Banks, that if they were earlier out of the 'Red Lion' on Saturday night, and earlier up on the Sabbath morning, they would maybe be able to appreciate the sermon better; and ye can tell Lame Sandy, the soutar, that when he stops wearing his wife into the grave with his ill tongue, he may have some right to find fault with the minister for an afternoon on the ice. And as for Gilbert Loan's auntie, just ask her if she let the doctor hear about her trouble, or if she expects him to look in and ask her if there's anything the matter with her little finger every time he passes her door!'

She paused for breath.

'I think I'll hae to be gaun; it's a coorse nicht!' said the Object on the chair, staggering to its feet.

'Now, Thomas, no offence is meant, and I hope you'll remember that I'm only speaking for your good,' said the minister's wife, taking a parting shot at a venture, and scoring a bull's-eye.

'Guid-nicht, Tammas Partan,' said Marget, as she closed the door. 'Haste ye back again.'

But Tammas has not yet revisited the manse of Dule.

23. A MIDSUMMER IDYLL: THE THREE BRIDEGROOMS AND THE ONE BRIDE

Yes, sir, I am the Registrar of births, deaths, and marriages in the parish of Kilconquhar, and I am asked to tell You the story of Meg MacGregor and her three lads. Well, it's an old tale now, and Meg's boys are here every summer vacation pestering the life out of me to bait their lines and dress their hooks. But it is a tale that is not by any means forgotten in Kilconquhar, and in the winter forenights the wives tell it to this day in the big kitchen where the lasses are at their knitting and the lads are making baskets of the long saugh wands before the heartsome fire.

It was mostly the wild Gregor blood that did it; but Meg's mother was an Elliot from the Border, and we all know that that's not greatly better. So what could ye expect of a lassie that had the daftness in her from both sides of the house, as ye might say?

Meg was a beauty. There is no doubt of that. She had been a big-boned 'hempie' at the Kirkland School for many a day, playing with the laddies when they would let her, early and late; yet clever at her books when she would take the trouble to learn. She had the 'birr' and go of twenty in her from the time that she could run alone. Peter Adair, one of her lads that was to be, came roaring in to his mother one morning when she was a dotting wee thing of four or five.

'What for are ye greetin' like that, Peter?' said his mother. 'Wha has been meddlin' ye?' Peter was soft in disposition, but the apple of his mother's eye.

'Meg MacGregor daddied my lugs because I wadna let her kiss me,' said the gallant Peter, between his sobs.

His mother laughed. 'Dinna greet, my bonny wean,' she said; 'the day'll maybe come when ye'll change yer mind aboot that!'

But when that day did come, his mother did not like it nearly so well as she had expected.

When Meg was between sixteen and seventeen it suddenly occurred to everybody that she was a beauty. It was at a party at the New Year at the Folds, and Meg

went there in a white gown. She had been at the dancing-school that Fiddler Stewart had in the village that winter, and she got very fond of the dancing. There were two or three lads at the Folds from the next parish, and as soon as the dancing began there was nobody that was sought after but only that hempie Meg.

The very next day it was a different Meg that walked the street, and a different Meg it was that came to the kirk on the Sabbath. She rode no more astride of the wildest pony in the glen, but she twined the lads like rushes of the meadows round the least of her fingers. Her father was then, as he is to this day, farmer in Stanninstane, and as douce and civil a man as there is in the parish, so the wild blood must have skipped a generation somehow. Say you so, sir? Indeed, I did not know that such a thing could be explained scientifically, but it's a thing I have noticed time and again. It has been recently discovered, you say. Dear me, I did not know it had ever been forgotten. 'Unto the third and fourth generation' is an old saying enough, but it's not unlikely that the wise men have forgotten all about Moses.

Isobel Elliot, David MacGregor's wife, died when Meg was but a lassie, and David himself never laid hand on his daughter in the way of correction all his life. She did as she liked with her father all the days of her life—as, indeed, for the matter of that, she did with every one in this parish, with the very minister when the fit was on her, as ye shall hear.

'With yourself for instance, Registrar?'

'Me? Oh no, sir. I'm a man that is well stricken in years and she would not trouble with me, but I do not deny that there was that in the lassie that one could not help but like, though as an elder I felt it my duty to give her a word of caution and advice more than once or twice.

What said she to that? Well, sir, she said not much; but she turned her eyes up at me under the fringes of her eyelashes, and pushing out her red lips discontentedly, she said:

'What can I do? The lads will not let me alone. I'm sure I want none of them!'

'And what are you going to do, Meg?' said I, smiling-like at her.

'Indeed, Registrar,' says she, 'that I don't know. Unless,' here the witch looked shyly up at me with her eyes fairly swimming in mischief, 'unless ye maybe nicht tak' me yourself.'

Keenest of all her suitors, 'clean daft' about her, said the countryside, were three lads of the parish. The first I have mentioned already. Peter Adair was his mother's son. She lived in the large house with the gate that stood a little back from the village street by the side of the bridge. She had money, and Peter being a delicate lad in his mother's estimation, and the apple of her eye at all times, had been kept at home when he should have been learning some profession. There was now and then a talk of his going up to Edinburgh to learn the scientific farming before he took a farm of his own, but it had never come to anything. He had fallen madly in love with Meg, however, and went regularly to town on Wednesdays to have a chance of talking with her for five minutes as she went about her shopping. His mother had so far yielded to his wishes as to get David MacGregor to take him on at Stanninstane to try his hand at the practical part of farming. He was in ecstasy, for, thought he, who knows what opportunities there may be of seeing Meg in the intervals of daily duty? But when David handed him over to the grieve, that unsympathetic Ayrshireman said, 'Practical fermin'! Certie, he shall hae that or my name's no' James Greg!' Whereupon in five minutes the delicate-handed Peter found himself on the top of a cart with a fork in his hand, taking his first lesson in practical farming by learning how to apply to the soil the natural fertilisers necessary for next year's crop. He had two days of that, when he resigned and went home, having decided that after all scientific farming was most in his line.

Peter Adair was known to be rich—at least in expectations—but nobody thought that Meg would favour him on that account. Being an heiress in her own right, she had no need. It was, therefore, with very great surprise that I was called into the office when- I

do my registrar's business, and authorised by Peter to put up his name on the board along with that of Margaret MacGregor, spinster, also of this parish.

'Meg's at the door,' he said; 'but she did not like to come in.'

Accordingly I went to the door, and caught a glimpse of Meg vanishing into Webster the draper's two doors above.

Peter had not long gone his way when another knock came to the door.

I opened the door myself. It was just growing dusk, and I could hear Meg MacGregor's voice saying:

'I telled ye afore, ye can gie in the names if ye like, but I'll no tell ye whether I'll hae ye or no' till the first of August. That's my twenty-first birthday, and I'll no' hae a mind o' my ain till that day.'

Again a single man came into the little office, lighted with the oil lamp which always smelled a little when I had the trimming of it to do myself. It was Robert Hislop, the stalwart son of the farmer of Netherton, known to be the strongest man in the parish. He had waited many a long night to have the duty of taking Meg home from all the soirees and parties in the neighbourhood. He was a steadfast, sturdy, and stupid fellow, who had first of all come about the Stanninstane farmhouse to court Meg's younger sister Bess; but who, like a piece of loose paper on the platform of a wayside station when the 'Flying Scotsman' thunders through, had been drawn into the wake of the greater power.

The story which connected him with Meg was one very characteristic of the man. He had been seeing Meg and her sister home from some party over at the village, and they had got as far on their way as the dark avenue under the trees where the white gate of the manse and the black gate of the kirkyard face one another in a weird whispering silence under the arch of leaves. There had been stories of a ghost which walked there, and Bess MacGregor was in a state of nervous excitement. Meg alternately played with and laughed at the fears of her sister. As they came between the gates something white leapt along the wall with an elricht shriek and

stood gibbering upon the black gate of the kirkyard.

Bess MacGregor dropped instantly in a faint. Stalwart Rob Hislop took one troubled glance at her. Then putting her into the hands of her sister he said, 'Fit some snaw on her face; I'll be back the nool!'

The spectre did not wait to be pursued, but made off swiftly among the tombs, its white robes flying in the wind. Rob Hislop went after it with the intent-ness of a greyhound on the trail. He caught his foot in some twisted grass, fell heavily, but rose again in an instant. He saw the spectre leap the wall and take the way through the fir-wood. Swifter than before he followed, and in a few minutes he ran the ghost down in a glade into which the moon was peeping over the edge of a cloud. The ghost holloed for mercy as Rob's heavy weight came down upon him.

'Let me up,' he said; 'it's only fun. I'm Tam M'Kittrick frae the Gallaberry!'

'Stan' up, then, Tam M'Kittrick frae the Gallaberry, for I'm gaun to gie ye the best lickin' ye ever got in your life!'

Next morning Rob was down at the village bright and early, before Purdie the grocer, that sells drugs to us when there's not time to go to Dumfries for them, had down his shutters. He rapped at his door, and Purdie opened it.

'Onybody no' weel, Rob?' he says, astonished like.

'Hoo muckle stickin' plaister hae ye, Maister Purdie?' says Rob, anxiously.

'I dinna ken,' said the grocer, retreating into his shop to see; 'maybes a yaird or a yaird an' a quarter.'

'Then ye had better gie me a yaird an' a quarter!' answered Rob, instantly.

'Preserve us a', Rob, what's wrang? Hae a' your kye fallen intil the quarry hole?'

'Na,' said Rob, seriously; 'it's for Tam M'Kittrick o' the Gallaberry. He was playing bogles up by the minister's liggate yestreen, an' I misdoot but he fell and hurt himself!'

Now, sir, you'll hardly believe me, though I can show you the notices in a minute, but that very nicht on the back of ten o'clock there was another knock

came on the door, and in comes Frank Armstrong, the young son of the farmer of Lintfield, whose ground in-arches with that of David MacGregor.

'Are you going to be married to Meg MacGregor?' said I, laughing.

'Yes,' said he, surprised. 'Hoo did ye ken that, Registrar?'

You might have knocked me down with a straw. There were three bridegrooms to one bride.

'Did Meg tell ye ye were to come an' gie in the names?' said I.

'Ay,' said the boy, blushing to the roots of his fair hair, for he was only a year older than Meg herself, and did not look his years.

'We made it up when I was harvesting there last year; but Meg, she wad never gie a decided answer till the nicht.'

'What did she say?' I asked.

'She said that she was to be married on her twenty-first birthday, but that she wadna tell me whether she wad hae me till we were afore the minister. 'But ye can pit up the names gin ye like,' says she.'

So all the names were put up.

There never was such a day on the street of this village as what there was that day. I had to lock myself in, front and back, and get my groceries through the window in the gable end; but I answered no questions, the young men held their counsel, and Meg was away from home.

Some one went to see the minister and inform him of the scandal. But they came away with a flea in their lug, for the minister told them that Meg herself had trysted him to marry her at Stanninstane on the 1st of August.

'And who did she say was the young man?' inquired the deputation.

'Well,' said the minister, running his hand through his white locks, 'I don't think she said, but I have no doubt that he is worthy of her. I have a very high opinion of Margaret's common sense and practical ability.'

'Preserve us, she's made a fule o' the verra

minister!' said the gossips.

There was nothing talked about but the marriage as the 1st of August came on. I got an invite from David himself, who kept a very straight upper lip on the subject. There were many that went up to the Stanninstane loaning end to see what was to come of it, but they got no farther, for there was David MacGregor's two brothers from the Highlands with big sticks, dour and determined chiefs, and they let nobody pass but them that were invited.

When we got there we were shown into the parlour, where about twenty of a company were assembled. Bess moved about as shy and sweet as any girl need be. Out of the reach of the more brilliant attractions of her sister, she was a very pretty young woman. Soon the minister came in. Peter Adair sat and simpered on the sofa in his lavender kids. Rob Hislop looked exceedingly uncomfortable in a black suit and a white rose which Bess had pinned in his button-hole. It took a long time to pin for Rob is very tall, and Bess could hardly reach so far up. During the operation Rob went red and white by turns, and looked pitifully at Bess. I thought that he was trying vainly to read her sister's decision in her eyes, but it turned out that I was wrong.

Sharp at the stroke of four David brought Meg in on his arm. She looked radiant in fleecy white, and her hair in rippling waves like the edges of the little clouds when the sun begins to think about going to bed. Well, yes, sir, if I am a crusty old bachelor, I thank God I was not born blind.

'Let the parties take their place,' said the minister. Meg looked wildly about.

'Where's Frank?' she cried, going suddenly as white as her dress.

'He has not come yet,' said Bess, as sweet as a ripe gooseberry, looking innocently at her sister. 'Rob Hislop says he saw him working in the barn!'

Meg dropped into a chair. 'It serves me right!' she said, beginning to sob. 'It serves me quite right. I'll not be married to anybody but Frank. I've been a wicked girl, and I deserve it!'

So she sat and cried while all of us looked helplessly on. Sometimes she glanced up at us, with the tears running steadily down her cheeks and dripping on the thin white of her marriage dress.

Bess stood by the side of Rob Hislop very demure and quiet, but with a curious light on her face.

'Run,' she said suddenly to Rob, 'and bring Frank Armstrong here this minute.'

And Rob Hislop, glad to find something to do, started immediately. Peter Adair went after him, but ere they were clear of the house Meg suddenly started from her chair and disappeared into the part of the house from which she had come. In a minute I followed the others to the door, and as I got to the end of the house I caught one glimpse of Meg MacGregor's white frock vanishing down the woodside path which led in the direction of Lintfield. Rob Hislop and Peter Adair had taken the same direction, but had gone round by the highway. It is said that Meg found Frank Armstrong in the barn getting the reaper ready for the harvest. But no one knows what she said to him. This only is certain, that in a little Frank and Meg came arm in arm along the plantation path, his father and brother following full of surprise. Frank was dressed in his working suit, but for all that he looked a bright and handsome bridegroom.

Soon the two messengers came in, much out of breath.

Meg went up to them and said, 'Rob, you'll be best man and tak' in Bessie. It was her ye aye likit best at any rate!'

'I'll no' say but ye're richt!' said Rob, obediently giving his arm to the blushing Bessie.

'And, Peter, you'll forgive me, I'm sure. It's for the best, an' I wad never have got on wi' yer mither!'

Peter extended his hand with the lavender glove still on it.

'Weel,' he said, 'maybes it'll be a relief to her!'

So Frank Armstrong married Meg MacGregor on her twenty-first birthday in his working coat, and it was not long before Rob Hislop married Bessie in new Sunday 'blacks.'

Peter Adair still lives with his mother in the house with the green gate by the bridge. He has started a poultry show, for he has become a great pigeon fancier. Meg's boys spend most of their time with him when they're here. But what put the ploy into the madcap lassie's head is more than I can tell. In my way of thinking it was just the wild blood of the MacGregors of the Highlands, and indeed the Border Elliots are little better. As is, indeed, generally admitted.

24. THE TUTOR OF CURLYWEE

The Minister of Education started to walk across the great moors of the Kells Range so early in the morning that for the first time for twenty years he saw the sun rise. Strong, stalwart, unkempt, John Bradfield, Right Honourable and Minister of the Queen, strode over the Galloway heather in his rough homespun. 'Ursa Major' they called him in the House. His colleagues, festive like schoolboys before the Old Man with the portfolios came in, subscribed to purchase him a brush and comb for his hair, for the jest of the Cabinet Minister is even as the jest of the schoolboy. John Bradfield was sturdy in whatever way you might take him. Only last session he engineered a great measure of popular education through the House of Commons in the face of the antagonism, bitter and unscrupulous, of Her Majesty's Opposition, and the Gallio lukewarmness of his own party. So now there was a ripple of great contentment in the way he shook back locks which at forty-five were as raven black as they had been at twenty-five; and the wind that blew gently over the great billowy expanse of rock and heather smoothed out some of the crafty crows' feet deepening about his eyes.

When he started on a thirty-mile walk over the moors, along the dark purple precipitous slopes above Loch Trool, the glory of summer was melting into the more Scottish splendours of a fast-coming autumn, for the frost had held off long, and then in one night had bitten snell and keen. The birches wept sunshine, and the rowan trees burned red fire.

The Minister of Education loved the great spaces of the Southern uplands, at once wider and eerier than those of the Highlands. There they lie waiting for their laureate. No one has sung of them nor written in authentic rhyme the strange weird names which the mountain tops bandy about among each other, appellations hardly pronounceable to the southron. John Bradfield, however, had enough experience of the dialect of the 'Tykes' of Yorkshire to master the intricacies of the nomenclature of the Galloway uplands. He even understood and could pronounce the

famous quatrain: 'The Slock, Milquharker, and Craignine, The Breeshie and Craignaw; Are the five best hills for corklit, That e'er the Star wife saw.'

The Minister of Education hummed this rhyme, which he had learned the night before from his host in the tall tower which stands by the gate of the Ferrytown of Cree. As he made his way with long swingin' gait over the heather, travelling by compass and the shrewd head which the Creator had given him, he was aware in old times the rocks and cliffs of the Dungeon of Buchan were kind of moss known a, 'corklit,' used for dyeing, the gathering formed part of the livelihood of the peasantry. About midday he came upon a shepherd's hut which lay in his track. He went briskly up to the door, passing the little pocket-handkerchief of kailyaird which the shepherd had carved out of the ambient heather. The purple bells grew right up to the wall of grey stone dyke which had been built to keep out the deer, or mayhap occasionally to keep them in, when the land was locked with snow, and venison was toothsome.

'Good day to you, mistress,' said the Minister of Education, who prided himself on speaking to every woman in her own tongue.

'And good day to you, sir,' heartily returned the sonsy, rosy-cheeked goodwife, who came to the door, 'an' blithe I am to see ye. It's no that aften that I see a body at the Back Hoose o' Curlywee.'

John Bradfield soon found himself well entertained— farles of cake, crisp and toothsome, milk from the cow, with golden butter in a lordly dish, cheese from a little round kebbuck, which the mistress of the Back House of Curlywee kept covered up with a napkin to keep it moist.

The goodwife looked her guest all over.

'Ye'll not be an Ayrshireman nae, I'm thinkin'. Ye kind o' favour them in the features, but ye hae the tongue o' the English.'

'My name is John Bradfield, and I come from Yorkshire,' was the reply.

'An' my name's Mistress Glencairn, an' my man Tammas is herd on Curlywee. But he's awa' ower by the

Wolf's Slock the day lookin' for some forwandered yowes.'

The Minister of Education, satisfied with the good cheer, bethought himself of the curly heads that he had seen about the door. There was a merry face, brown with the sun, brimful of mischief, looking round the corner of the lintel at that moment. Suddenly the head fell forward and the body tumultuously followed, evidently by some sudden push from behind. The small youth recovered himself and vanished through the door, before his mother had time to do more than say, 'My certes, gin I catch you loons,' as she made a dart with the handle of the besom at the culprit.

For a little John Bradfield was left alone. There were sounds of a brisk castigation outside, as though some one were taking vigorous exercise on tightly stretched corduroy. 'And on the mere the wailing died away!'

'They're good lads eneuch,' said the mistress, entering a little breathless, and with the flush of honest endeavour in her eye, 'but when their faither's oot on the hill they get a wee wild. But as ye see, I try to bring them up in the way that they should go,' she added, setting the broomstick in the corner.

'What a pity,' said the Minister of Education, 'that such bright little fellows should grow up in this lonely spot without an education.'

He was thinking aloud more than speaking to his hostess. The herd's wife of Curlywee looked him over with a kind of pity mingled with contempt.

'Edicated! did ye say? My certes, but my bairns are as weel edicated as onybody's bairns. Juist e'en try them, gin it be your wull, sir, an' aiblins ye'll fin' them no' that far ahint yer ain!'

Going to the door she raised her voice to the telephonic pitch of the Swiss jodel and the Australian 'coo — ee, Jee-mie, Aa-leck, Aa-nie, come ye a' here this meenit!'

The long Galloway vowels lingered on the still air, even after Mistress Glencairn came her ways back again into the house. There was a minute of a great silence outside. Then a scuffle of naked feet, the sough

of subdued whispering, a chuckle of interior laughter, and a prolonged scuffling just outside the window.

'Gin ye dinna come ben the hoose an' be douce, you Jeemie, an' Rob, an' Alick, I'll come till ye wi' a stick! Mind ye, your faither 'ill no be lang frae hame the day.'

A file of youngsters entered, hanging their heads, and treading on each other's bare toes to escape being seated next to the formidable visitor.

'Wull it please ye, sir, to try the bairns' learning for yoursel?'

A Bible was produced, and the three boys and their sister read round in a clear and definite manner, lengthening the vowels it is true, but giving them their proper sound, and clanging their consonants like hammers ringing on anvils.

'Very good!' said John Bradfield, who knew good reading when he heard it.

From reading they went on to spelling, and the great Bible names were tried in vain. The Minister of Education was glad that he was examiner, and not a member of the class. Hebrew polysyllables and Greek-proper names fell thick and fast to the accurate aim of the boys, to whom this was child's play. History followed, geography, even grammar, maps were exhibited, and the rising astonishment of the Minister of Education kept pace with the quiet complacent pride of the Herd's Wife of Curlywee. The examination found its appropriate climax in the recitation of the 'Shorter Catechism.' Here John Bradfield was out of his depth, a fact instantly detected by the row of sharp examinees. He stumbled over the reading of the questions. He followed the breathless enunciation of that expert in the 'Caritches,' Jamie, with a gasp of astonishment. Jamie was able to say the whole of Effectual Calling in six ticks of the clock, the result sounding to the uninitiated like the prolonged birr of intricate clockwork rapidly running down.

'What is the chief end of man?' slowly queried the Minister of Education, with his eye on the book.

'Mans-chiefend-glorfyGod-joyim-frever!' returned Jamie nonchalantly, all in one word, as though some

one had asked him what was his name.

The Minister of Education threw down his Catechism.

'That is enough. They have all done well, and better than well. Allow me,' he said, doubtfully turning to his hostess, 'to give them each a trifle.'

'Na, na,' said Mistress Glencairn, 'let them e'en do their work without needin' carrots hadden afore their nose like a cuddy. What wad they do wi' siller?'

'Well, you will at least permit me to send them each a book by post—I suppose that you get letters up here occasionally?'

"Deed, there's no that muckle correspondence amang us, but when we're ower at the kirk there, yin o' the herds on Lamachan that gangs doon by to see a lass that leeves juist three miles frae the post-office, an' she whiles fetches ocht that there may be for us, an' he gi'es it us at the kirk.'

John Bradfield remembered his letters and telegrams even now entering in a steady stream into his London office and overflowing his ministerial tables, waiting his return—a solemnising thought. He resolved to build a house on the Back Hill of Curlywee, and have his letters brought by way of the kirk and the Lamachan herd's lass that lived three miles from the post-office.

'Oot wi' ye!' said the mistress briefly, addressing her offspring, and the school scaled with a tumultuous rush, which left a sense of vacancy and silence and empty space about the kitchen.

'And now will you tell me how your children are so well taught?' said John Bradfield. 'How far are you from a school?'

'Weel, we're sixteen mile frae Newton Stewart, where there's a schule but no road, an' eleven frae the Clatterin' Shaws, where there's a road but no schule.'

'How do you manage then?' The Minister was anxious to have the mystery solved.

'WE KEEP A TUTOR!' said the herd's wife of Curlywee, as calmly as though she had been a duchess.

The clock ticked in its shiny mahogany case, like a hammer on an anvil, so still it was. The cat yawned

and erected its back. John Bradfield's astonishment kept him silent.

'Keep a tutor,' he muttered; 'this beats all I have ever heard about the anxiety of the Scotch peasantry to have their children educated. We have nothing like this even in Yorkshire.'

Then to his hostess he turned and put another question.

'And, if I am not too bold, how much might your husband get in the year?'

'Tammas Glencairn is a guid man, though he's my man, an' he gets a good wage. He's weel worthy o't. He gets three an' twenty pound in the year, half score o' yowes, a coo's grass, a bow o' meal, a bow o' pitatas, an' as mony peats as he likes to cast, an' win', an' cairt.'

'But how,' said John Bradfield, forgetting his manners in his astonishment, 'in the name of fortune does he manage to get a tutor?'

'He disna keep him. I keep him!' said Mistress Glencairn with great dignity.

The Minister of Education looked his genuine astonishment this time. Had he come upon an heiress in her own right?

His hostess was mollified by his humbled look.

'Ye see, sir, it's this way,' she said, seating herself opposite to him on a clean-scoured, white wooden chair: 'there's mair hooses in this neighbourhood than ye wad think. There's the farm hoose o' the Black Craig o' Dee, there's the herd's hoose o' Garrary, the onstead o' Neldricken, the Dungeon o' Buchan—an' a wheen mair that, gin I telled ye the names o', ye wadna be a bit the wiser. Weel, in the simmer time, whan the colleges gang doon, we get yin o' the college lads to come to this quarter. There's some o' them fell fond to come. An' they pit up for three or fower weeks here, an' for three or fower weeks at the Garrary ower by, an' the bairns travels ower to whaur the student lad is bidin', an' gets their learnin'. Then when it's time for the laddie to be gaun his ways back to college, we send him awa' weel buskit wi' muirland claith, an' weel providit wi' butter an' eggs, oatmeal an' cheese, for the comfort o' the wame o' him. Forbye we gather up among oorsels an'

bid him guid speed wi' a maitter o' maybe ten or twal'
poun' in his pooch. Ari that's the way we keep a tutor!'

A LETTER DECLARATORY TO THE SECOND EDITION

Dear Louis Stevenson —It is, I think, a remark of your own that the imprudences of men, even oftener than their ill deeds, come home to roost. At least, if you have not so remarked it, you have not lived so long without observing it. Now, in some wise, you have at least a god-papa's responsibility for the Stickit Minister, and if you have no spoon of silver for the poor fellow, you will be expected at the least duly to hear his catechism.

A month ago when, entirely without permission, I dedicated the first edition of my prose first-born to you, shame kept me from further connecting you with what no one but yourself might ever read. As for you, I had you in a cleft stick, as you shall presently hear. But now a second edition and a preface imperatively required have together thawed my blateness. But it occurs to me that you may deny any parental responsibility, even vicarious. Well, as much is mostly done on these occasions. In that case we will proceed to lead the proof. You have, no doubt, forgotten a power of good law in your time, and might have forgotten even more had you ever known it. But not the wit of the Great Lord President himself in his best days could have shaken this case of mine.

Let me then suggest to you Saranac Lake, a bleak sheet of ice ' somewhere in America'—east winds, hotels with a smell of cooking in the corridors, melting snows, and mountains. It is near flitting and settling day with you there, and as your custom is, you are owing a many letters—to me among others, epistles one, two, and three. For days you have passed your desk with a kind of pride and wicked pleasure in stubbornly defying your conscience.

But one morning in the gloaming, Conscience has you down before you were fairly awake, and right grimly takes certain long arrears out of you. Then, according to your own account, your cries of penitence might have been heard a mile. In this abased condition, the Black Dog riding hard on your back, you made yourself responsible for words to the ensuing effect : 'Write,' you said, 'my Timothy, no longer verse, but use Good

Galloway Scots for your stomach's sake—and mine. There be overly many at the old tooth comb!

Well, 'tis scarce fair to hold you to it, I know; but, your Will thus fleeing in a mere *sauve qui pent* —conscience hot-foot after you, hectoring with victory—'If you do, I'll read it every word,' says you. And so I had you.

Often when in my turn the Black Dog hath been upon me, and I seemed to see plainly that no Adam's son would ever read a single line, least of all a reviewer —have I rubbed hands and laughed to think of you in that spotless linen suit, sitting, as you imagined, safe and cool under whatever may be the Samoan substitute for a rose.

But I hold to my pound of flesh. Will you, nil! you, you must read—and every word.

Nevertheless, if you find anything here, even a thousand sea miles from good, it is so because ever since Saranac, I have been, like Macready in Edinburgh when the Great Unknown came in, 'playing to Sir Walter.'

S. R. CROCKETT.

Samuel Rutherford Crockett (author)

Born in Balmaghie on September 24th 1859, Samuel Crockett was the illegitimate son of dairy maid Annie Crockett. He was brought up on the farm of Little Duchrae by his strict Cameronian maternal grandparents, and the family moved to Castle Douglas in 1867. He gained a Galloway bursary to Edinburgh University in 1876. His writing career began as a way to support himself through his studies. He had articles and short stories/sketches published in a wide range of contemporary magazines. He travelled abroad extensively and became a Free Church minister in 1886. He married Ruth Milner in 1887 and they had four children. His writing became successful following the publication in 1893 of 'The Stickit Minister' and he gave up the ministry to concentrate on his writing in 1895. His popular, episodic and serialised style of writing ensured him bestseller status in his day and despite prolonged ill health he published on average 2 novels a year throughout his long career. He died on April 16th 1914 in France.

Cally Phillips (editor)

Brought up and educated in Dundee and Edinburgh, Cally is a graduate of St Andrews University and worked professionally as a screenwriter and playwright for twenty years before shifting focus towards creative advocacy. Cally was first introduced to the work of S.R.Crockett when she moved to Galloway in 1995, where she was Writer in Residence for three years (2002-2004). Over the past decade she has set up and run a variety of innovative creative projects. She now lives in North East Scotland where as well as being series editor for Ayton Publishing, she also reviews, edits and writes fiction and non fiction.

Ayton Publishing Limited

The 32 Volumes in this collection represent those of Crockett's published fictional work for adults which feature Galloway as a central component of the narrative. We have published other books by and about Crockett in separate editions and collections. To find out more about our current catalogue visit our website www.aytonpublishing.co.uk or the Crockett Catalogue in the online store www.unco.scot

If you are interested in finding out more about S.R.Crockett and Galloway as portrayed in his works you can join The Galloway Raiders for free. There is a website with a host of interesting and informative material and special offers on publications for members.

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